

SIERRA NEVADA  
CONSERVANCY

## SNC Governing Board Meeting

June 3, 2021

This meeting will be  
held online.

BOARD MEETING





## Board Meeting Agenda June 3, 2021

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### Board Meeting

**9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (End time is approximate)**

Pursuant to Executive Order N-29-20 issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on March 17, 2020, certain provisions of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act are suspended due to a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent with this Executive Order, the June 2021 Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board Meeting will be conducted virtually through the Zoom Webinar Platform. Members of the public may join the meeting using either of the following steps:

[Join the webinar](#)

Or

Dial either of these numbers and enter the Conference Code to join the meeting by telephone:

Dial:

USA 636 651 3142 US Toll

USA 877 402 9757 US Toll-free

Conference code: 347291

Meeting materials are available on the [SNC Board Meetings page](#) (<https://sierranevada.ca.gov/our-board/board-meetings/>). Members of the public can make comments on agenda items during the meeting by using either method of joining the meeting – virtually or telephonically – and by following the moderator’s directions on how to indicate their interest in speaking. Public comment will be taken at the appropriate time during each agenda item and during the Public Comment agenda item at the end of the meeting for non-agenda items. Additional information on ways to provide public comments on agenda items is available on the SNC Board Meetings page.

For additional information, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 823-4700, toll free at (877) 257-1212, or via email to [tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov](mailto:tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov).

For assistance with joining the meeting by telephone or the Zoom meeting link, please contact [SNC Technical Support](#) ([ITSupport@sierranevada.ca.gov](mailto:ITSupport@sierranevada.ca.gov)). Any person who has a disability and requires reasonable accommodation to participate in this public meeting should contact Ms. Armstrong no later than five (5) working days prior to meeting.



1. **Call to Order**
2. **Oath of Office**
3. **Roll Call**
4. **Approval of March 4, 2021, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**
5. **Board Chair's Report**
6. **Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
  - a. Executive Officer Update
  - b. Administrative Update
  - c. Policy & Outreach Update
  - d. Field Operations & Grants
7. **Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

The Board may take action to adopt California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and award grants to the following projects:

- a) #1277, the Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan project in Tuolumne County, in the amount of \$70,581 to the Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.
  - b) #1280, the Forest Projects Plan in Amador, Calaveras, and Alpine counties, in the amount of \$200,000 to the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.
8. **Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Program Directed Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

The Board may take action to adopt CEQA and award grants to the following projects:

    - a) #1279-RT, The Colby Mountain Recreation Area project in Lassen County, in the amount of \$221,000 to the Butte County Resource Conservation District with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.
  9. **2020–21 Action Plan Reporting (INFORMATIONAL)**

Staff will report on work completed under the 2020–21 Action Plan. (Implementation of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Plan: Actions for 2020–21.)



**10. 2021–22 Action Plan (ACTION)**

The Board will consider, and may act to approve, the SNC's 2021–22 Action Plan.

**11. Boardmembers' Comments**

Provide an opportunity for members of the Board to make comments on items not on the agenda.

**12. Public Comments**

Provide an opportunity for members of the public who have not previously addressed the Board to comment on non-agenda items. The Board Chair reserves the right to limit the time allocated for each person providing public comment.

**13. Adjournment**

**Additional Board Materials**

- [Key Meetings and Presentations](#)
- [Letters of Support](#)
- [News Articles](#)

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**Closed Session:** Following, or at any time during, the meeting, the Board may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation, property negotiations, or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126





## Board Meeting Minutes March 4, 2021

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### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Board Chair O'Brien amended the agenda to allow for the Oath of Office to be administered prior to roll call.

### 2. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Jessica Morse
- Nathan Magsig
- Susana Reyes
- Aaron Albaugh
- Bob Johnston
- Lori Parlin
- Ron Hames
- Paul Roen
- Richard Gillihan
- John Brissenden
- Rosemarie Smallcombe
- Steve Kuennen
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Christopher Heppe

### 3. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Board Chair Terry O'Brien administered the Oath of Office to Jessica Morse, California Natural Resources Agency Designee, Steve Kuennen, United States Forest Services, Supervisor Lori Parlin, Central Subregion Representative,



Supervisor Ron Hames, East Subregion Representative, and Supervisor Aaron Albaugh, North Subregion Representative.

**4. Approval of December 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to approve the December 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, and Abstain – 3. The motion passed.

**5. Board Chair's Report**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien addressed the Board and announced the upcoming Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Summit to be held on Monday, March 8, 2021.

Chair O'Brien also addressed upcoming meetings and stated that he hopes to return to in-Region meetings in September 2021.

**6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

**a. Executive Officer Update**

Executive Officer Angela Avery welcomed all new and existing Boardmembers.

Avery provided Boardmembers with an overview of the governor's expected \$1 billion Forest Resilience budget proposal. Avery said the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is identified for \$20 million in current year funding and \$50 million for budget year funding. Avery said that the current year funding would have a quick turnaround time so it would be incumbent upon the SNC to move quickly to encumber these funds. Avery said that SNC has completed "pre-work" to facilitate disbursement of these funds.

Avery provided legislative updates, which included a report on the Senate's proposed funding plan for wildfire and forest resilience that would increase funding across programs.

Avery also announced that the SNC has the potential to receive additional funds from the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. Avery said the Delegation of Authority presented for Board approval provides authority for the Executive Officer to enter into the agreements necessary to accept this funding.

Avery highlighted the revision of Senate Bill (SB) 208 (Dahle). This is a reintroduction of SB 989 from the previous legislative year that would expand the Sierra Nevada Conservancy boundary. This bill asks for the expansion to include the originally proposed boundary lines but also

includes Trinity County. This bill would add about 2 million acres to SNC's current 25 million-acre Region.

Avery also advised the Board that SNC will closely monitor travel and facility restrictions related to upcoming in-Region Board meetings. Avery acknowledged the overall desire to attend in-person meetings, but advised the Board that at this time, due to planning and time restraints, we will not be able to hold the June Board meeting in-Region.

b. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Division Chief Amy Lussier told the Board that this March marks the one-year anniversary since SNC staff have been working remotely. Lussier said that the recent lift of the stay-at-home order allows SNC staff to make occasional office visits as needed and area staff will now be able to travel.

Lussier told the board of recent updates to the office to ensure the safety of SNC employees and members of the public when in the office or traveling. Recent updates to the facilities include touchless faucets, toilets, and towel dispensers in the restrooms. Lussier also said that barriers will be installed at the front desk.

Lussier also announced the new hire, Austin Rasmussen, who will be providing office support and front desk duties while employee Denice Maberry is working on a temporary Contact Tracing Assignment.

Lussier provided a high-level review of the budget document provided in the Board materials. Lussier also provided a review of the future funding SNC expects to receive and the three new positions that will come with the additional funding. Lussier stated that if the Budget is approved and signed by the governor, the SNC will move quickly to fill the three new positions.

Lussier also told the Board that staff is tracking COVID-related expenses and will continue to pursue reimbursement for all these expenses.

c. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Branch Manager Brittany Covich provided an overview and current update to the Board. Covich outlined six legislative bills that would directly affect SNC. Covich also said that SNC is tracking two additional bond bills.

Covich provided additional policy updates, including updates on the state's newly named Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's recently released Action Plan, and two recent state policy workshops that were sponsored by or participated in by SNC Executive Officer Angela Avery.



Covich provided the Board with a 2020 Fire Season Update saying that the California Air Resources Board reported that statewide, the 2020 fire season produced over 115 million metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) which is triple the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> on record for any previous fire year. Other examples of a record-setting fire season were shared with the Board.

Covich announced the publication of the SNC Annual Report, which is a collaborative piece of work that contains science, strategy, and accomplishments within the Sierra Nevada Region.

Covich shared a video promoting a recent project that SNC funded. Covich said that the trailer and full video are available on SNC's social media outlets.

In response to a question by Boardmembers about the statewide reforestation strategy outlined in the Forest Management Task Force's Action Plan, Boardmember Steve Kuennen provided an update on the actions that the United States Forest Service (USFS) is taking to develop reforestation and restoration plans. Kuennen said that it is looking at long-term reforestation and restoration but it is also partnering with state and local agencies to work collaboratively. Kuennen said that the USFS continues to look to the future and ways it can support moving the state towards resilience.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around reforestation, the multiple agencies involved, and pathways to accomplishing this work collaboratively.

d. Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative Update

Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) Coordinator Erin Ernst provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation that provided a background and overview of science, pillars, and current efforts on the TCSI. This update referenced the recently completed *Framework for Resilience, Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative* publication provided in the Board materials.

Boardmembers engaged in extensive conversation around the need and actions being taken to accomplish the goals of TCSI.

**7. 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines (ACTION)**

Field Operations & Grants Branch Manager Andy Fristensky outlined the staff report and the *DRAFT: 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines* provided in the Board meeting materials.

Fristensky highlighted the draft guideline priorities, eligible applicants, and eligible projects. Fristensky's review included examples of eligible projects as well as the evaluation criteria that would be used to evaluate grants.

Executive Officer Angela Avery advised the Board that once this funding is approved by the legislature, the goal will be to grant the funds as soon as possible.

Clarification was also provided regarding deadlines for applications. Fristensky stated that SNC would take applications on an ongoing basis and noted the internal deadline of April 30 that must be met in order to bring projects to the Board for consideration in July.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around timelines and evaluation criteria.

Boardmembers requested the definition of "restoration" (page 18 of the *DRAFT: 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines*) be changed from "restoring to a historical state" to "restore to previous historical ecological site conditions".

**Public Comment:** Tom Esgate, Lassen Fire Council – suggested the use of the term "historic ecological site condition" as a potential definition of the term "restoration" in the grant guidelines.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded, a motion to approve (with the definition of "restoration" amended, to "historic ecological site condition) the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program, pending Budget Act approval, and appropriation of funds to SNC in the FY 2020-21 budget.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 11, Nay – 0, and Abstain – 1. The motion passed.

#### **8. Executive Officer Authorization to Enter Agreements Related to Wildfire and Forest Resilience Proposal (ACTION)**

Deputy Executive Officer Julie Alvis presented the Board with an overview of steps that staff has taken to develop the Executive Officer Authorization presented in this agenda item. Alvis stated that this delegated authority would apply only to agreements entered into with other state partners.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Susana Reyes seconded, a motion to delegate authority to the Executive Officer to approve and execute grants and contracts consistent with the following criteria: 1) Are from programs included in the wildfire and forest resilience budget proposal 2) Meet the goals and objectives of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program 3) Comply with the program guidelines of the state program from which the grant or contract is awarded 4) Be reported on at

regularly scheduled Board meetings; and to report all new grants approved to the Board.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 12, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

Boardmember Nathan Magsig left the Board meeting at 12:10 p.m. (beginning of the lunch break).

**9. Forest and Watershed Health Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt presented project details and a review of the recommendation for the two projects before the Board at this meeting.

- a) #1275, the Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project in Lassen and Plumas counties, in the amount of \$250,000 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

**Public Comment:** Kaitlyn (full name inaudible), representing the Lassen Fire Safe Council, spoke regarding project #1275 and thanked the Board for consideration of the project. Kaitlyn stated that there have been 11 projects that have been previously funded by SNC and provided praise to SNC Area Representative Kristy Hoffman.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project (1275), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$250,000 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 11, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

- b) #1276, the Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 acres in Modoc National Forest in Modoc County, in the amount of \$120,000 to the California Deer Association with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmembers discussed the project border and tribal inclusion.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Fandango Planning Project to restore over 20,000 acres in Modoc National Forest (1276), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$120,000 to the California Deer Association, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 11, Nay – 0. The motion passed.



**10. Roadmap to Resilience (INFORMATIONAL)**

Ashley Conrad-Saydah, consultant with Spatial Informatics Group (SIG), hired by SNC to assist in providing recommendations for scaling lessons learned from the TCSI to the rest of the Sierra Nevada in support of the “Roadmap to Resilience,” presented a project update and initial observations.

Conrad-Saydah provided an overview of the TCSI program areas and the proposed SNC approach designed to achieve Board goals of increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration across the Sierra Nevada. The approach combines communication strategies, CEQA/NEPA coordination, SNC partnerships, and more focused efforts from SNC’s science and management teams to achieve the goal.

Process, framework, recommendations, and timelines were presented.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation providing feedback to assist SIG in finalizing their “Roadmap to Resilience” report.

**11. Boardmembers’ Comments**

No Boardmember comment at this time.

**12. Public Comments**

No public comment at this time.

**13. Adjournment**

The Board meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## **Agenda Item 6b: Administrative Update**

### **COVID Impacts**

With his new Beyond the Blueprint for a Safer Economy, Governor Newsom laid out a plan to fully open California's economy on June 15. In early April, the California Department of Public Health noted: "We will only progress to this stage if we continue to stay vigilant, keep wearing our masks and getting vaccinated. The state will monitor hospitalization rates, vaccine access, and vaccine efficacy against variants with the option to revisit the June 15 date if needed." What this means is that all industries across the state can return to usual operations with common-sense risk-reduction measures in place. This change assumes the state has equitable vaccine availability, and a consistently low burden of disease. It also moves the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) closer to full return to the office and to being able to conduct in-Region Board meetings again. The SNC remains cautious but is allowing staff to begin to slowly return to the office as the need arises. The Administrative division continues to schedule and track daily office access to keep occupancy at 25 percent or less and works to keep strict masking and distancing protections in place. In April, SNC distributed a mandatory Return to Office Training document to all staff, which complied with various state laws and requirements to keep employees safe and stop the spread of the virus. Information on the virus and vaccines, as well as requirements if anyone is exposed or tests positive, were included in the training packet. In accordance with Cal/OSHA, SNC also developed and posted its COVID Prevention Plan which details the ways SNC will keep the premises safe, and how it will respond in the event a COVID-19 case occurs in an SNC office.

Other COVID-related actions included the implementation of Senate Bill (SB) 95, chaptered on March 19 but retroactive to January 1, 2021. This bill provides up to 80 additional hours of paid sick leave for any employee unable to work or telework due to COVID impacts. The state is also providing a reasonable amount of administrative time off which can be used by employees who can only schedule vaccine appointments during regular work hours.

COVID-19 expenses continue to be tracked and reported to Department of Finance (DOF). As of mid-April 2021, SNC has spent \$60,055 on COVID-related expenses, and expects to spend an additional \$77,151 through the end of 2021-22. These are all expenses related to COVID-19 (except contact tracing), like operating expenses and equipment, staff time dedicated to COVID-related planning and organization, and a limited term hire brought on to help fulfill the duties of one contact tracer's position. Through March 2021, SNC has spent \$96,513 on contact tracing. While SNC expects to receive reimbursement for these costs, exactly how or when departments will receive reimbursement is still unclear.

## **Budgets and Accounting**

On April 13, 2021, Governor Newsom signed SB 85, the early action \$536 million wildfire package. The SNC received \$20 million General Fund in current year 2020-21 funding. Of this \$20 million, up to 5 percent (\$1 million) can be used for support. Funds must be encumbered by June 30, 2022 and must be liquidated by June 30, 2025. As of this report, SNC expects to be included in the 2021-22 budget to receive \$47.5 million General Fund for local assistance, \$2.5 million for support, and three staff positions. Staff has completed an initial draft of SNC's 2021-22 budget which will be adjusted as necessary depending on the final, signed budget this summer. The Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) portion of the budget includes a 5 percent spending reduction as directed by the DOF. Changes to any of the above-reported numbers that are included in the governor's May Revision will be reported verbally, although none are expected.

The staff is currently working to finalize year-end responsibilities in contracts and procurement, accounting, and budgets. The SNC is on track to spend 100 percent of its ELPF budget.

To view the status of SNC's 2020-21 budget, please see page 3 of this report.

## **Procurement and Contracts**

This year, SNC was required to renew its Purchasing Authority Accreditation through the Department of General Services (DGS). As part of the accreditation renewal process, DGS reviews SNC's purchasing practices, policies, and procedures to ensure compliance with State Contracting Manual requirements. As part of the review, DGS determined that SNC's Procurement and Contracting Officer (PCO), currently Amy Lussier, is required to hold a Career Executive Assignment (CEA) level classification. DGS requested that SNC either provide an updated Organization Chart showing Ms. Lussier at the CEA Level or assign a new PCO, citing Public Contract Code 10333(a)(1). A closer review of PCC 10333(a)(1) revealed that there is no official requirement that the PCO be employed at the CEA level, but instead that this is a DGS policy. Because Ms. Lussier has successfully served as SNC's PCO for several years, and because she works at the second level of the organization, DGS granted SNC an exemption on the basis that her title be changed to Deputy Executive Officer of Administration to accurately reflect her role. To ensure SNC maintains its leadership structure, Julie Alvis's title was subsequently changed to Chief Deputy Executive Officer. These are title changes with no associated increase in pay. The accreditation review was successfully completed and resulted in an increase to SNC's Informal IT Purchasing Authority from \$9,999 to \$100,000.

## **Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.**



## 2020-21 SNC Budget (as of March 31, 2021)

### *Support (Non-Reimbursable)*

<b>Environmental License Plate Fund Support</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Expended</b>
Personal services	\$3,595,772	\$2,703,632
Operating Expenses & Equipment (OE&E)	\$807,228	\$451,951
<b>Total ELPF (Personal Services + OE&amp;E)</b>	<b>\$4,403,000</b>	<b>\$3,155,583</b>

<b>Sierra Nevada Conservancy Fund Support</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Expended</b>
Personal Services	\$138,293	\$88,619
Operating Expenses & Equipment (OE&E)	\$7,224,931	\$2,256,314
<b>Total SNC Fund (Personal Services + OE&amp;E)</b>	<b>\$7,363,224</b>	<b>\$2,344,933</b>

<b>Proposition 1 Total</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Expended</b>
Program delivery	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$63,756</b>

<b>Proposition 68</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Expended</b>
Program delivery – Conservancy allocation	\$275,000	\$87,133
Planning & monitoring – Conservancy allocation	\$50,000	\$13,500
Program delivery – Forest restoration allocation	\$225,000	\$72,734
<b>Total Proposition 68</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>	<b>\$173,367</b>

<b>Proposition 84 Total</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Expended</b>
Planning & monitoring	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$8,752</b>

### *Local Assistance (Non-Reimbursable)*

<b>Proposition 68 Total</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Awarded</b>
Local assistance – Conservancy allocation	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$370,000</b>

*Reimbursements*

<b>SNC Fund Reimbursements – Projected</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Invoiced</b>
CAL FIRE	\$7,158,705	\$3,691,373
CNRA/DOC	\$906,856	\$162,659
CHIPs	\$149,825	\$149,825
HCD/NDRC	\$84,782	\$41,689
Stewardship Council	\$9,826	\$4,099
<b>Total Projected Reimbursements</b>	<b>\$8,309,994</b>	<b>\$4,049,645</b>

<b>Federal Funding – Total Projected</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Invoiced</b>
USFS – Plumas National Forest	\$1,815,689	\$866,666

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## **Agenda Item 6c: Policy & Outreach Update**

### **Background**

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) policy and outreach activities support sound, science-based agency action and educate key decision makers about the statewide importance of the Sierra Nevada to encourage appropriate investment in the Region. This is done by understanding the latest scientific studies on forestry, watershed health, and other relevant issues; utilizing the recommendations and outcomes of that research to inform policy recommendations; and sharing those recommendations and outcomes through SNC's outreach efforts. Developing and maintaining relationships with legislators and their staff, state and federal agencies, local governments, Regional partners, the research community, and traditional and non-traditional media contacts are key to the success of SNC's policy and outreach efforts. In addition, while SNC's policy and outreach activities support all the Regional Goals in the SNC's Strategic Plan, they focus heavily on the cultivation of an impactful Regional identity for the Sierra Nevada Region.

### **Current Status**

#### *State Budget Update:*

On April 13, Governor Newsom signed [Senate Bill \(SB\) 85](#) which appropriates \$536 million in early action funding for wildfire prevention, forest health, and community resilience. The package includes \$20 million for the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), \$60 million for Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program, \$16 million for the Climate Catalyst Revolving Loan Fund, \$3 million to support wood utilization market development through the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, and funding for CAL FIRE's forest health and fire prevention grants programs. The funding supports the goals of California's recently released Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and is part of a multi-agency, all-hands-on-deck approach to forest and wildfire resilience.

The early action budget is part of a \$1 billion Forest and Wildfire Resilience funding proposal under consideration by state leaders. Both the Assembly and Senate have introduced their budget bills for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22, and both include \$50 million in funding for the SNC which matches the governor's January budget proposal. The SNC will continue to track hearings related to the proposed budget. Decisions on additional wildfire prevention funding will finalize after release of the budget's May Revise and legislative hearings. The final budget will be presented for signature by the governor on or before June 15.



### *Legislative Update:*

The 2021-22 legislative session is underway with policy and fiscal committees meeting weekly. At the time of this Board meeting, legislators will be passing bills out of their houses of origin. Legislators have been asked to reduce the number of bills they introduce this session, anticipating the session could be impacted by COVID-19.

The SNC continues to track over 60 bills, including two natural resources bonds. Policy topics covered in these bills include regional climate change programs and planning, community wildfire planning, natural and working lands project tracking, carbon sequestration, workforce development, wildfire research and technology, and energy resilience.

There are a handful of bills that could impact SNC directly, including:

#### **Senate Bill 208**

SB 208 (Dahle - Bieber) would modify SNC's boundaries by adding a portion of Siskiyou County and Trinity County to the Region and increasing the area of Shasta County within the Region. The same legislation was introduced last session through SB 989. At the time of this report, SB 208 had been rereferred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

#### **Senate Bill 45**

SB 45 (Portantino - La Cañada Flintridge) is similar to the last session's bond with the same bill number. As currently written, the "Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2022" would, if approved by voters in November 2022, finance wildfire prevention, drought, and other natural disaster prevention as well as community resilience from climate change. The bond would also provide for safe drinking water and protect water supply and water quality; protect fish and wildlife; protect agriculture land; protect coastal lands, oceans, bays, waters, natural resources, and wildlife; and provide for climate resilience, workforce development, and education. The \$5.51 billion bond currently includes over \$2.2 billion for wildfire prevention and community resilience, including \$300 million for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program statewide, \$50 million for the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, and \$85 million for the SNC's broader programs. At the time of this report, SB 45 had been referred to Senate Governance and Finance Committee.

#### **Senate Bill 604**

SB 604 (Hueso - San Diego) would establish the Nature and Parks Career Pathway and Community Resiliency and Equity Act of 2021, which would require state conservancies and the Wildlife Conservation Board to establish grant programs to fund climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, natural disaster, and other climate emergency projects. At the time of this report, SB 604 had been referred to the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

### **Assembly Bill 9**

AB 9 (Wood - Santa Rosa) would codify the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program under the Department of Conservation (DOC) to build local and regional capacity and develop, prioritize, and implement strategies and projects that create fire adapted communities by improving watershed health, forest health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience. At the time of this report, AB 9 had been referred to the Assembly Local Government Committee.

### **Assembly Bill 1500**

AB 1500 (Garcia - Coachella) the “Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparation, Flood Protection, Extreme Heat Mitigation, and Workforce Development Bond Act of 2022” would, if approved by voters in June 2022, finance projects to fund activities for each category in the title. The \$6.7 billion bond currently includes \$1.1 billion for wildfire prevention and climate risk reduction, including \$150 million for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program statewide and at least \$60 million for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to implement the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program and to fund watershed improvement, forest health, biomass utilization, and forest restoration workforce development. At the time of this report, AB 1500 had been rereferred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

Staff will continue to track these bills and others that may impact SNC’s work and the work of SNC’s Regional partners.

### ***Forest Management Task Force Update:***

On April 8, Governor Newsom announced changes to the name, structure, and mission of the Forest Management Task Force (Task Force). The newly named “Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force” will be responsible for delivering on the commitments outlined in the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan issued in January and in the wildfire and forest resilience funding package. The following day, the governor appointed Patrick Wright as the new director of the task force.

The restructured Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force will be co-chaired by California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot and U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester Randy Moore. They will be joined by CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld, Governor’s Office of Planning and Research Director Kate Gordon, CAL FIRE Director Thom Porter, California State Association of Counties President James Gore, Rural County Representatives of California Chair Stacy Corless, and Don Hankins of the Inter-Tribal Indigenous Stewardship Project.

The first meeting of the newly formed Task Force is scheduled for May 20, 2021.

### ***Tribal Engagement Update:***

Staff members have long had a desire to deepen relationships with and increase trust, communication, and collaboration between the tribes of the Sierra Nevada and the

Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Over the last year, the staff has been having internal discussions around opportunities to improve SNC's engagement with tribes. Those conversations have resulted in the following:

- Formation of the SNC's Tribal Engagement Workgroup, a cross-agency group that meets monthly to develop, vet, and implement strategies to deepen partnerships with tribes in the Sierra Nevada.
- Completion of tribal engagement capacity assessments by all SNC staff to identify opportunities for additional training and support and support internally to improve engagement with tribes across all programs.
- Identification of a trainer to provide cultural sensitivity and history of Native American tribes in California for staff in FY 2021-22.
- Improvements made to the tribal contacts list update process to ensure SNC's tribal contacts list remains current and allows for more seamless communications with tribal partners.
- Updates to SNC's practices for grants notifications to ensure best practices are being used to notify tribes of potential SNC-funded projects in their ancestral boundaries. Staff also reviewed proposed changes with the Native American Heritage Commission.
- Language encouraging proposals from tribes and tribal organizations, as well as language emphasizing the requirement of non-tribal applicants to engage tribes as early as possible in project proposals, was strengthened in SNC's Grant Guidelines for Immediate Action funding. Language was also added clearly reminding applicants that cultural monitoring is an eligible cost to include in their budgets.
- Staff is working to identify more opportunities to support and engage with tribes working in areas where the SNC has the most relevant resources to offer, such as forest health, cultural burning, and workforce development.

Staff will continue to build on the momentum of these foundational improvements to expand and strengthen partnerships with tribes by identifying opportunities to invest funding and other resources to build more tangible, meaningful partnerships with tribes in the Sierra Nevada Region.

### *Communications Update:*

Since the Board met in March, the staff has published ten new Sierra Spotlight blog posts covering topics ranging from the [introduction of SNC's newest Boardmember](#), to [2020 wildfires and greenhouse gas emissions](#), to [highlights from the SNC's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program work](#), and the [SNC's Annual Report](#). These posts are getting picked up and used by partners to help describe the importance of doing ecological forest health work and by both traditional and non-traditional media outlets. For example, the Mountain Messenger, California's oldest weekly publication, utilized one of the stories from the Annual Report on [SNC funded work and the 2020 Sheep Fire](#) to help illustrate the significance of the governor's early action budget passing. Maven's Minutes, a well-known blog focused on state water policy, picked up and shared the spotlight post on [2020 fires and potential water supply impacts](#). Staff will continue to utilize this platform on the website to share the success of SNC's work and science and policy information critical to the Region.

In late March, staff launched an update to the What We Do section on the SNC website. This section now clearly presents the WIP as SNC's primary program and mechanism through which SNC does most of its work. In addition, it frames the kind of work that SNC supports, including work on the ground, building capacity, and advancing science and policy, in a way that aligns with policy and funding conversations in Sacramento, and provides links to recent Sierra Spotlight posts and connected programs on the website.

### **Next Steps**

Over the coming months, staff will be working closely with the California Natural Resources Agency and the Field Operations & Grants staff to communicate SNC's progress related to implementing projects funded by the early action budget. Staff will continue to track state policy priorities such as California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and will continue engagement on ongoing technical and policy workgroups established to support the state's forest health and climate goals. Staff will track and respond to requests for information on legislation and will work closely with Field Operations staff to describe the policy and funding needs being expressed by partners in the Region, including those identified through SNC's capacity building work funded by the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program.

### **Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.**



**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## **Agenda Item 6d: Field Operations & Grants Update**

### **Background**

The primary function of Field Operations & Grants is to serve the needs of the Sierra Nevada Region. Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) area representatives engage in local collaboratives and develop a deep understanding of the needs and opportunities where they live and work. Grants & Reimbursements staff develops and administers grant programs focused on achieving SNC's goals. Field Operations staff manages SNC's local-support grants which have historically been SNC's primary grant programs (local-support grants use funds directly allocated to SNC). Local-support grants are distinct from reimbursement grants, such as California Climate Investments and Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Programs grants that SNC receives from other agencies and then regrants to partners.

Since its inception, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has effectively and efficiently funded nearly 500 grants totaling over \$125 million. Funding for SNC grants has been provided through a variety of sources including Proposition 84, Proposition 1, Proposition 68, Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund, California Climate Investment grants (through CAL FIRE), Moonlight Fire Restoration Fund (through Good Neighbor Agreement with Plumas National Forest), and the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grant (through California Natural Resources Agency).

In anticipation of the imminent passing of California's wildfire and forest resiliency budget, the SNC Board approved the 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines during the March 2021 Board meeting. Staff has been working with Regional partners to identify and develop forest health and fire prevention projects that best fit the intent of this grant program.

### **Current Status**

Since the last Field Operations & Grants Staff Report in December 2020, SNC has closed eight grants totaling \$2.7 million. Four of those projects were forest health planning projects, two were forest health implementation projects and two were strategic lands conserved projects. Currently, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has over 120 active grants totaling over \$62 million spread across all grant programs.

Since the March 2021 SNC Board meeting, the staff has entered into two grant agreements under our Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program and one grant agreement under our Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. Staff has also worked with CAL FIRE to extend one of our California Climate Investments parent grant agreements, which will allow seven projects an additional year to complete \$1.4 million of forest treatments.

The SNC launched the Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Program on April 13, 2021. By April 30, 2021, applicants submitted 32 grant proposals totaling over \$38 million. Staff then completed application intake and processing and checked the eligibility of all applications. During May 2021, staff evaluation of applications, including CEQA review, commenced.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will continue to ensure grants are on time and on track, which includes overseeing progress reports, processing invoices and change requests, conducting site visits, and monitoring projects after completion.

Staff will complete the evaluation process for applications to the Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Program. Staff will notify the appropriate tribal contacts, local government agencies, and water districts regarding all eligible grant projects being considered for funding in the area. Staff will prepare recommendations seeking funding authorization for grant projects during the July 2021 Board meeting.

### **Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## Agenda Item 7: Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Award Recommendations

### **Background**

California voters passed Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for all Act of 2018, on June 5, 2018.

Proposition 68 includes two allocations of funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC):

- Section 80135(c) allocates \$25 million for competitive grants towards implementation of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) for projects related to forest health and climate resiliency.
- Section 80110(b)(9) allocates \$30 million for purposes consistent with SNC's governing statute.

The Budget Act of 2020 appropriated \$5 million to SNC for local assistance from Section 80110(b)(9) dedicated to conservancy purposes. In June 2020, the Board authorized grant guidelines for the following programs with the associated funding distribution:

- \$3 million for Forest and Watershed Health
- \$1 million for Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- \$1 million for Vibrant Recreation and Tourism

### ***Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Program***

The current Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Program includes four focus areas. Projects must fall within one of these focus areas to be considered for funding.

1. **Implementation of prescribed fire** to improve watershed health.
2. **Large-landscape planning** projects for forest health that demonstrate multiple watershed and ecosystem benefits. These projects must complete project planning on a minimum of 10,000 acres.
3. **Implementation of forest health planning projects** for which SNC previously funded the planning phase.
4. Projects that connect and serve **underserved partners**. Strategic partners that have received no more than one SNC grant since the start of the WIP Forest Health Program (in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16 with funding from Proposition 1) will

be eligible for grants to support planning or implementation of multi-benefit forest and watershed health projects.

Designed as a directed grant program, SNC staff works closely with local partners to identify and develop projects. Concept proposals and subsequent full proposals are evaluated on a quarterly basis.

### **Previous Awards**

In March 2021, the Board awarded the two Forest and Watershed Health Grants below:

- Project #1275 the Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project in Lassen and Susanville counties, in the amount of \$250,000, to the Lassen Fire Safe Council
- Project #1276 the Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 Acres in Modoc National Forest in Modoc County, in the amount of \$120,000, to the California Deer Association

After these awards, there is \$2,630,000 remaining for Forest and Watershed Health Grant awards, planned for distribution through FY 2021-22.

### **Current Status**

The SNC staff is working closely with local partners to develop Forest and Watershed Health projects. There are two projects which have been evaluated through SNC's directed grants process and are now recommended for Board approval.

#### ***Project #1277***

#### ***Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan***

#### ***Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America***

***\$70,581***

The Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council of the Boy Scouts of America (Council) will develop a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) for their 100-acre Camp Hi-Sierra property in eastern Tuolumne County. The Council owns and manages the property as an outdoor camping and recreation facility that hosts weekend and summer programs for up to 1,500 participants annually. The NTMP will guide and provide the necessary environmental compliance to allow the applicant to continually manage their forest resources and fuels on the property in perpetuity. The Council plans to maintain the property for recreation and educational purposes directly around their facilities and manage the rest of the property as a sustainable forest for watershed and wildlife benefits. The property is adjacent to the Stanislaus National Forest (SNF) and the community of Cold Springs. By treating hazardous fuel loading and creating a more resilient forest stand structure, the project will benefit the local community as well as help the SNF meet the goals of the nearby landscape-level Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape project.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Section 15262 of Title 14 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

- [Access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption \(Project #1277\)](#)

### *Project #1280*

#### *Forest Projects Plan*

#### *Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority*

*\$200,000*

The Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMWRA) plans to complete National Environmental Policy Act and CEQA analysis and documentation for forest health treatments on 10,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service land in the Upper Mokelumne watershed in Amador and Calaveras counties. This project builds upon a Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grant UMRWA received through the SNC to complete a project inventory and prioritization tool for the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group. Using that tool, UMRWA identified approximately 30,000 acres of high-priority national forestland to treat; planning for 10,000 acres of treatment will be completed through this project. The UMRWA is partnering with the Eldorado and Stanislaus national forests to complete this plan. The resulting shovel-ready projects generated from this effort will provide a multi-year pipeline of high-priority forest health projects. All projects will be focused in the Upper Mokelumne Watershed, providing downstream benefits to multiple communities within the Sierra Nevada, as well as the municipal water supply to the nearly two-million California residents within East Bay Municipal Utility District's service area in the East Bay.

CEQA Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Section 15262 of Title 14 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

- [Access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption \(Project #1280\)](#)

## **Next Steps**

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

Staff will continue to work with partners to develop additional Forest and Watershed Health projects and anticipates recommending projects at future Board meetings to award the full amount of funds available. If the recommended grants presented in this report are authorized, a minimum of \$2,359,419 is available for future awards under the current appropriation.

## **Recommendation**

**7a. Staff recommends the Board authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the *Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan***

**project (1277), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$70,581 to the Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**

**7b. Staff recommends the Board authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the *Forest Projects Plan* project (1280), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$200,000 to the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**

## Exhibit A

### Sierra Nevada Conservancy Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program SNC Project Number 1277

**SNC ID Number:** 1277

**Applicant:** Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America

**Project Title:** Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan

**SNC Subregion:** South Central

**County:** Tuolumne

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$70,581

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$70,581

**Total Project Cost:** \$93,081

**Funding Authority:** Proposition 68, Chapter 8, Section 80110(b)(9)

#### **Project Scope / Description**

The Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan Project (Project) is a Category Two planning project located in eastern Tuolumne County near the communities of Long Barn, Cold Springs, and Pinecrest. The applicant, Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council of the Boy Scouts of America (Council), owns and manages the 100-acre Camp Hi-Sierra as an outdoor camping and recreation facility that delivers weekend and summer programs to approximately 1,500 participants annually. The Project will create a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP), which will guide and provide the necessary environmental compliance to allow the applicant to sustainably manage forest resources and fuels on the property in perpetuity.

The Project will develop an NTMP for the Camp Hi-Sierra property. A Registered Professional Forester will be hired to assess the forest resources and develop a detailed plan to sustainably manage the 100-acre parcel to provide fire protection for the camp infrastructure and protect campers and staff, while maximizing watershed, carbon, and wildlife benefits. The NTMP will be submitted to CAL FIRE and will serve as the environmental compliance document for future forest treatments on the property.

The Council has removed large hazard trees on approximately 30 acres. The NTMP would enable the Council to maintain the property for recreation and educational purposes directly around their facilities and manage the rest of the property as a sustainable forest for watershed and wildlife benefits. The property is adjacent to the Stanislaus National Forest (SNF) and the community of Cold Springs, and near the popular Pinecrest recreation area. Treating hazardous fuel loading and creating a more



resilient forest will benefit the local community, in addition to helping the SNF meet the goals of the nearby landscape-level Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape project that is currently in the planning stage.

The Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council of the Boy Scouts of America is a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in the San Jose area with a mission to prepare young people to make ethical choices by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. The Council maintains two other camps, one located in the Ventana Wilderness and one in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The Council has been successfully completing fuel reduction projects on these other two properties using NTMPs and they are a recent recipient of funding from CAL FIRE's Forest Improvement Grant Program.

The Council has been working with the same forestry consultants since the property's purchase and a discounted price has been negotiated for the NTMP. In addition, the Council has collected preliminary forest data, which will accelerate the Project and reduce the overall cost.

The Project meets multiple goals outlined in SNC's Strategic Plan. First, protecting Camp Hi-Sierra brings tourism to Tuolumne County, strengthening the local economy. Second, the Project will lead to a more resilient and healthy forest structure, protecting the local community and protecting downstream resources within the Tuolumne River Watershed. Downstream beneficiaries include communities and farmland in the San Joaquin Valley and the City of San Francisco.

## Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Six-month progress reports	December 2021 June 2022
Timber cruise and growth-and-yield analysis	July – October 2021
Archaeological records check	July 2021
NTMP drafting	September – December 2021
NTMP submittal for agency review	December 2021
Final report	June 2022
<b>Estimated Project Completion Date</b>	<b>June 30, 2022</b>

## Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project management	\$2,610
Travel/site visits	\$3,765
Registered professional forester	\$55,000
Administrative costs	\$9,206
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$70,581</b>

## Project Letters of Support or Opposition

### *Support*

- Jonathan Pangburn, Unit Forester, San Benito-Monterey Unit, CAL FIRE

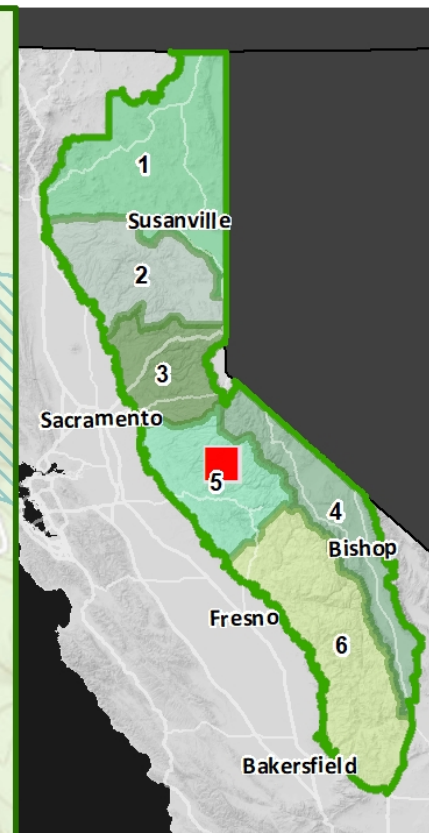
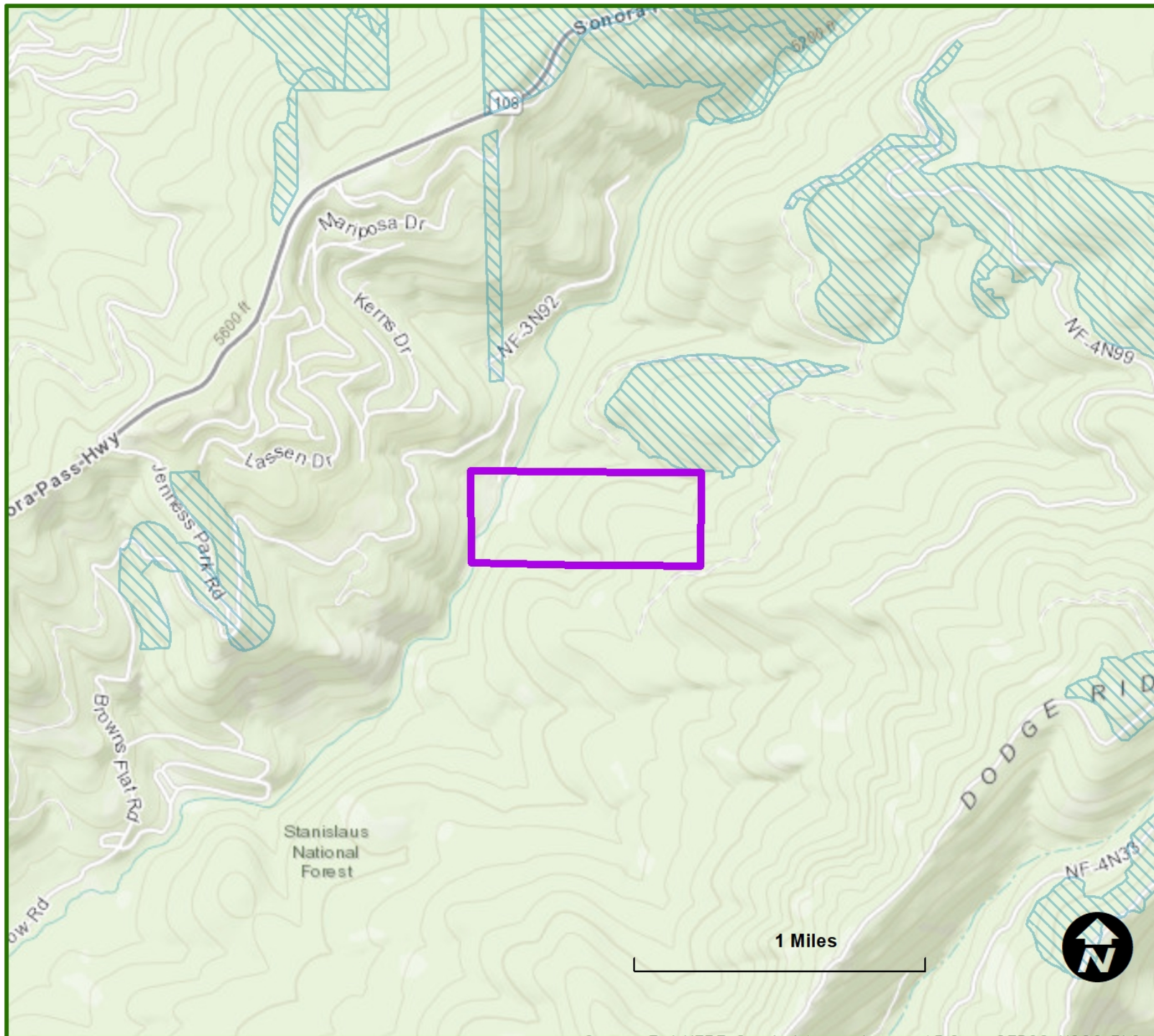
### *Opposition:*










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## Project Performance Measures

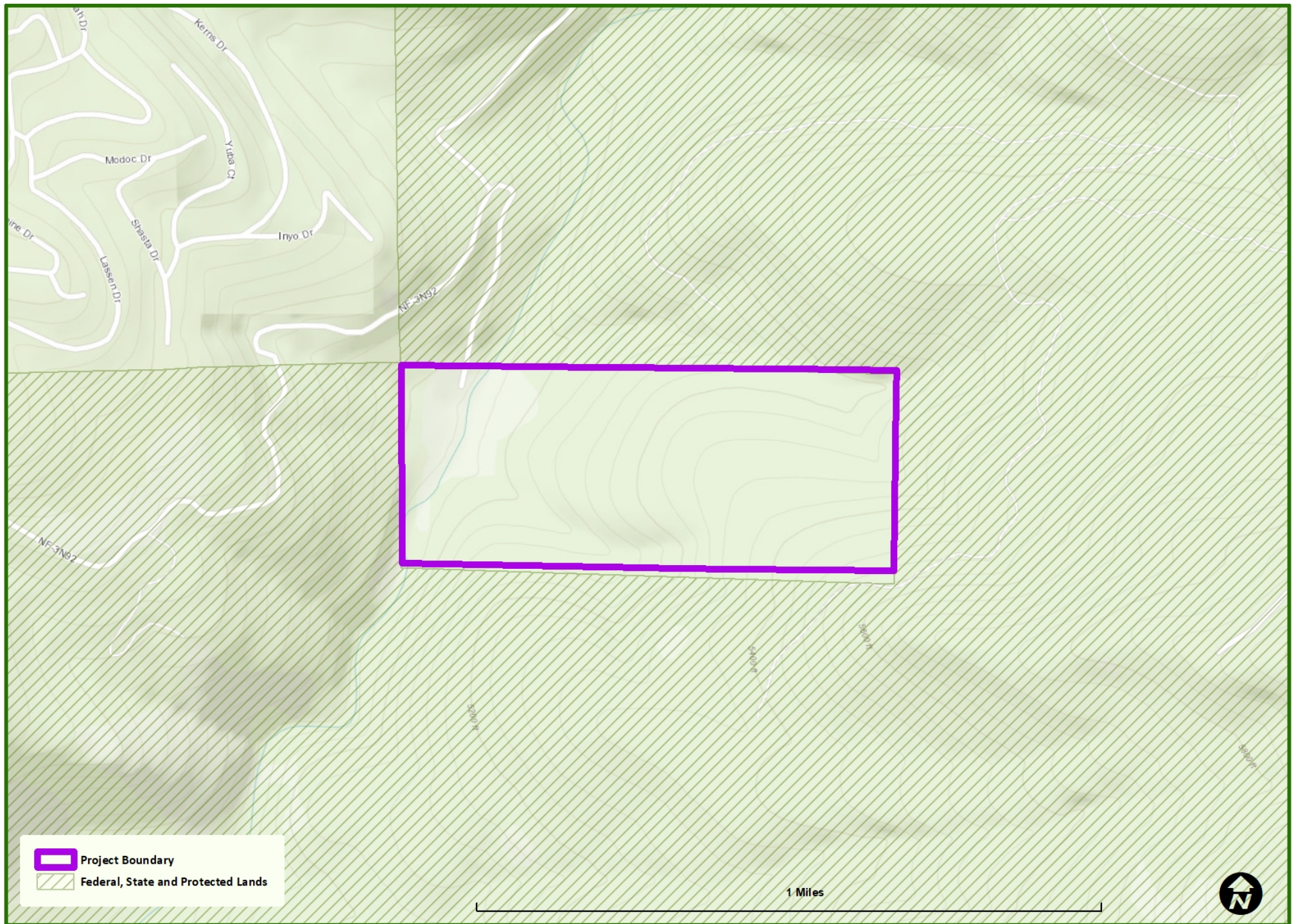
There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project-specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here may be modified before the grant agreement is executed.

- Number of acres completing pre-implementation planning and environmental compliance



-  Project Boundary (Primary Map)
-  Other Projects (Primary Map)
-  Project Location (Regional Map)
-  1 North Subregion
-  2 North Central Subregion
-  3 Central Subregion
-  4 East Subregion
-  5 South Central Subregion
-  6 South Subregion





**1277 Camp Hi-Sierra NTMP**  
**Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America**





**1277 Camp Hi-Sierra NTMP**  
Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America

# Notice of Exemption

## Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205  
Auburn, CA 95603

Project Title: Boy Scouts of America Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (SNC1277)

Project Location – Specific: 29211 Hwy 108, Long Barn, CA 95335

Project Location - City: Long Barn

Project Location - County: Tuolumne

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The project involves developing a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) that will allow the Boy Scouts of America to manage and protect their 100-acre property in the Hwy 108 corridor near Long Barn, CA. Development of the NTMP will include inventory of all roads and crossings; development of accurate GIS maps depicting project boundaries, roads, landings, crossings, sediment discharge points, silviculture boundaries, watercourses, erosion hazard ratings, drafting sites, operational reference points, yarding methods, watershed and other cumulative impact assessment areas and past projects; cruising of all stands; scoping and analysis of protected wildlife species known or likely to occur in the project area; development of a botanical scoping list; survey for protected wildlife species discovered during the scoping phase; and archaeological survey, preparation of a confidential archaeological addendum, recording of discovered sites, and flagging protection buffers around sites of potential significance.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Boy Scouts of America, Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies)

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies, of the CEQA Guidelines. This project involves only the planning studies for possible future actions which the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board has not approved, adopted, or funded. The planning project does not require the preparation of a Negative Declaration or Environmental Improvement Report but does require consideration of environmental factors. The project is also categorically exempt under CEQA Section 15306, Information Collection (Class 6), because it consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The proposed activities are for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Shannon Ciotti

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 906-7345

**If filed by applicant: N/A**

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: Deputy Executive Officer

Signed by Lead Agency: Yes

Signed by Applicant: No

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

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

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

## Exhibit A

### Sierra Nevada Conservancy Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program SNC Project Number 1280

**SNC ID Number:** 1280

**Applicant:** Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority

**Project Title:** Forest Projects Plan

**SNC Subregion:** South Central

**Counties:** Calaveras and Amador

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$200,000

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$200,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$250,000

**Funding Authority:** Proposition 68

#### **Project Scope / Description**

The Forest Projects Plan (Plan), submitted by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMRWA), will complete California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for 10,000 acres of forest health treatments. All acreage will be on national forest land in the Upper Mokelumne watershed in Amador and Calaveras counties.

In early 2020, UMRWA received a Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grant from the SNC to complete a project inventory and prioritization tool for the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG). Using that tool, UMRWA identified approximately 30,000 acres of high-priority national forestland to treat. Working closely with the Calaveras District of Stanislaus National Forest and the Amador District of Eldorado National Forest, and with guidance from the ACCG, UMRWA will complete NEPA and CEQA clearance for 10,000 of the 30,000 acres initially identified.

The Upper Mokelumne River Watershed has many diverse stakeholders completing forest health projects. The SNC has invested approximately \$4.5 million in both planning and implementation funding to improve forest conditions throughout the watershed. All potential treatment areas have been identified as high priority by the ACCG because fuel reduction work in those areas will protect highly valued resources and assets.

The UMRWA is a joint powers authority comprised of six local water agencies and the counties of Alpine, Amador, and Calaveras. The UMRWA's mission is to enhance water supply and protect water quality and the environment, to perform water resource planning for the region, and to seek and secure grant and other funding for local agency



implementation activities. The Plan will complete NEPA and CEQA analyses on both the Amador District of Eldorado National Forest and the Calaveras District of Stanislaus National Forest. Both districts have been key partners in the ACCG and have a current master stewardship agreement with UMRWA.

The UMRWA is partnering with the Eldorado and Stanislaus national forests to complete this Plan. The UMRWA will work closely with ACCG members to find collaborative solutions during project planning. United States Forest Service (USFS) staff will contribute time and resource surveys to complete the Plan. The UMRWA will contribute \$50,000 towards the effort.

The resulting shovel-ready projects generated from this effort will provide a multi-year pipeline of high-priority forest health projects. The outcomes of these projects will meet the “Healthy Watersheds and Forests” goal in the SNC Strategic Plan. All projects will be focused in the Upper Mokelumne Watershed providing downstream benefits to multiple communities within the Sierra Nevada as well as providing municipal water supply to the nearly two-million California residents within East Bay Municipal Utility District’s service area.

## Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Six-month progress reports	December 2021 June, December 2022
USFS and ACCG coordination	July 2021 – December 2022
Prepare proposed action and scoping notices	September – December 2021
Prepare NEPA documents and decision memos	September 2021 – December 2022
Prepare CEQA documents	January – December 2022
Final report	January 1, 2023
<b>Estimated Project Completion Date</b>	<b>January 1, 2023</b>

## Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project management and coordination	\$40,000
NEPA preparation (proposed action, scoping, decision memos)	\$85,000
CEQA preparation (IS/MND, air quality analysis, tribal consultation)	\$49,000
Administrative costs	\$26,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>

## Project Letters of Support or Opposition

### *Support:*

- Rick Hopson, District Ranger, Amador District, Eldorado National Forest
- Ray Cablayan, District Ranger, Calaveras District, Stanislaus National Forest
- Regine Miller, Executive Director, Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions
- Andreas Borgeas, California State Senator, 8<sup>th</sup> District
- Michael Minkler, General Manager, Calaveras County Water District
- Michael Tognolini, Director of Water and Natural Resources, East Bay Municipal Utility District

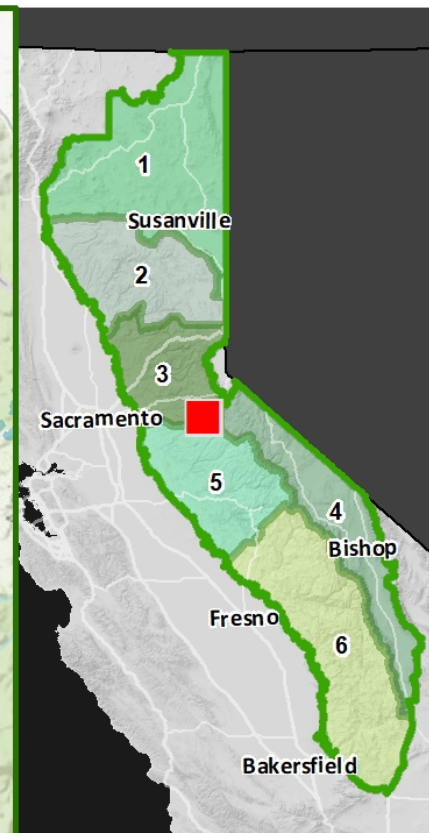
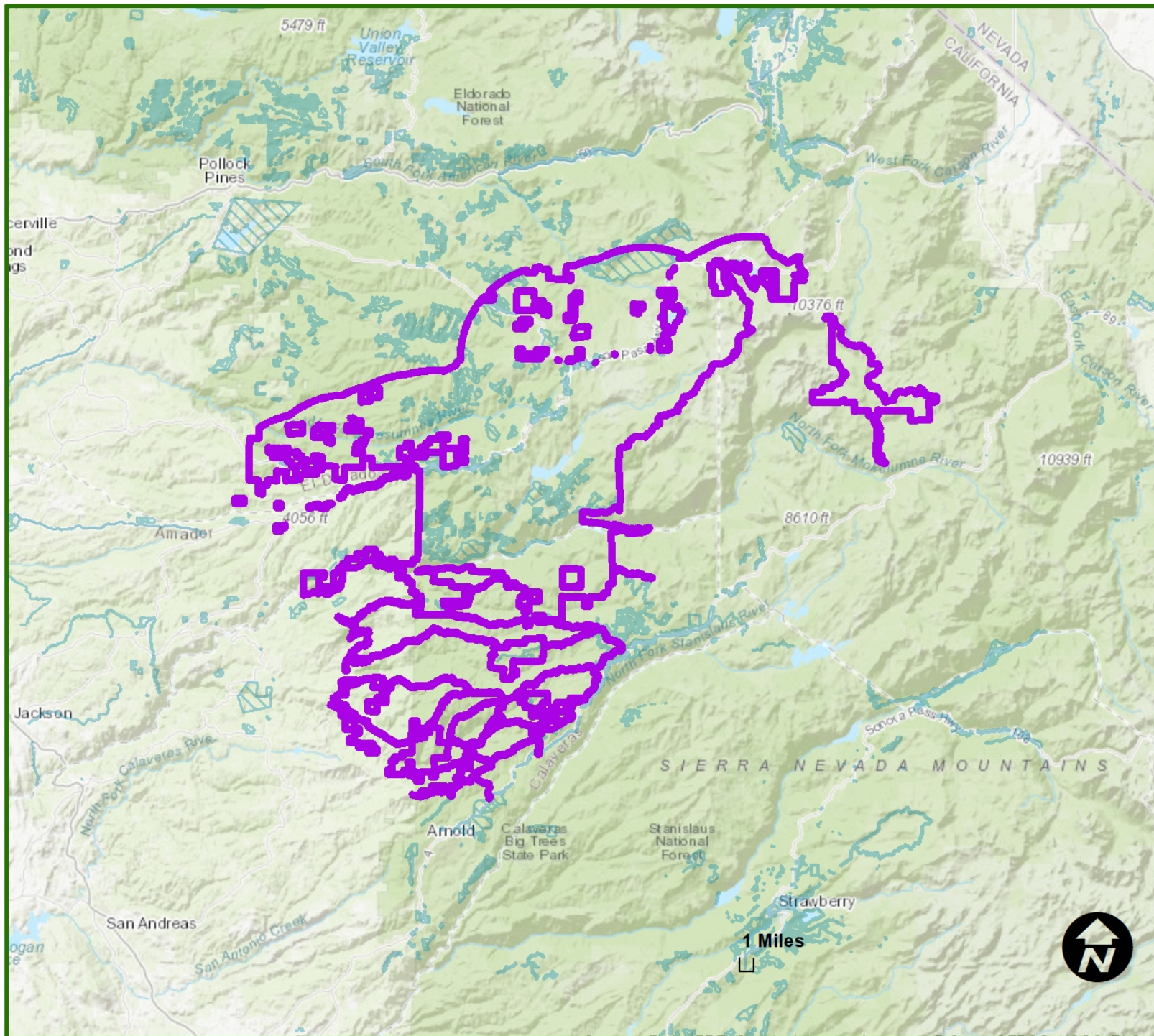
### *Opposition:*










- None received

## Project Performance Measures

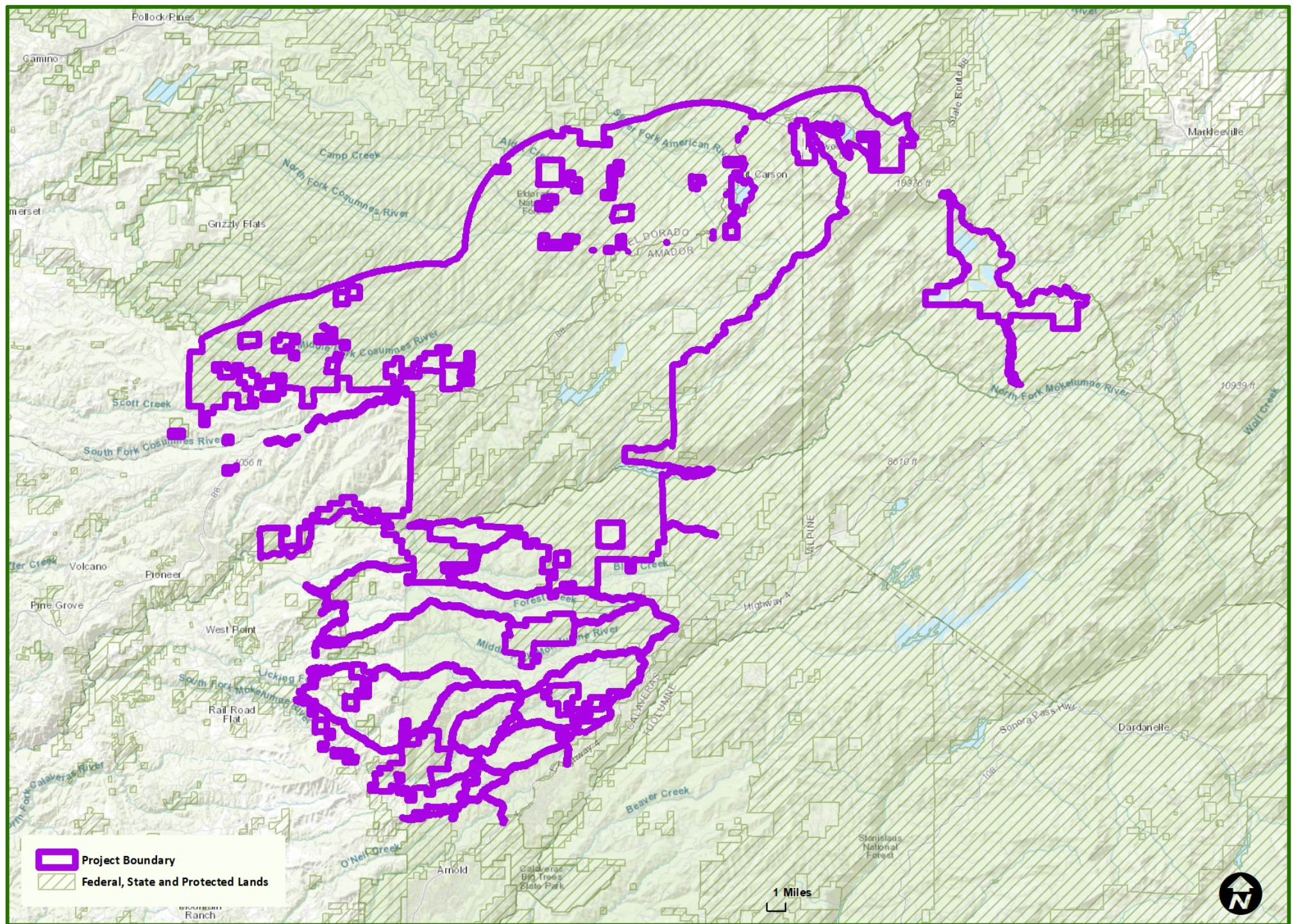
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- Number of acres completing pre-implementation planning and environmental compliance



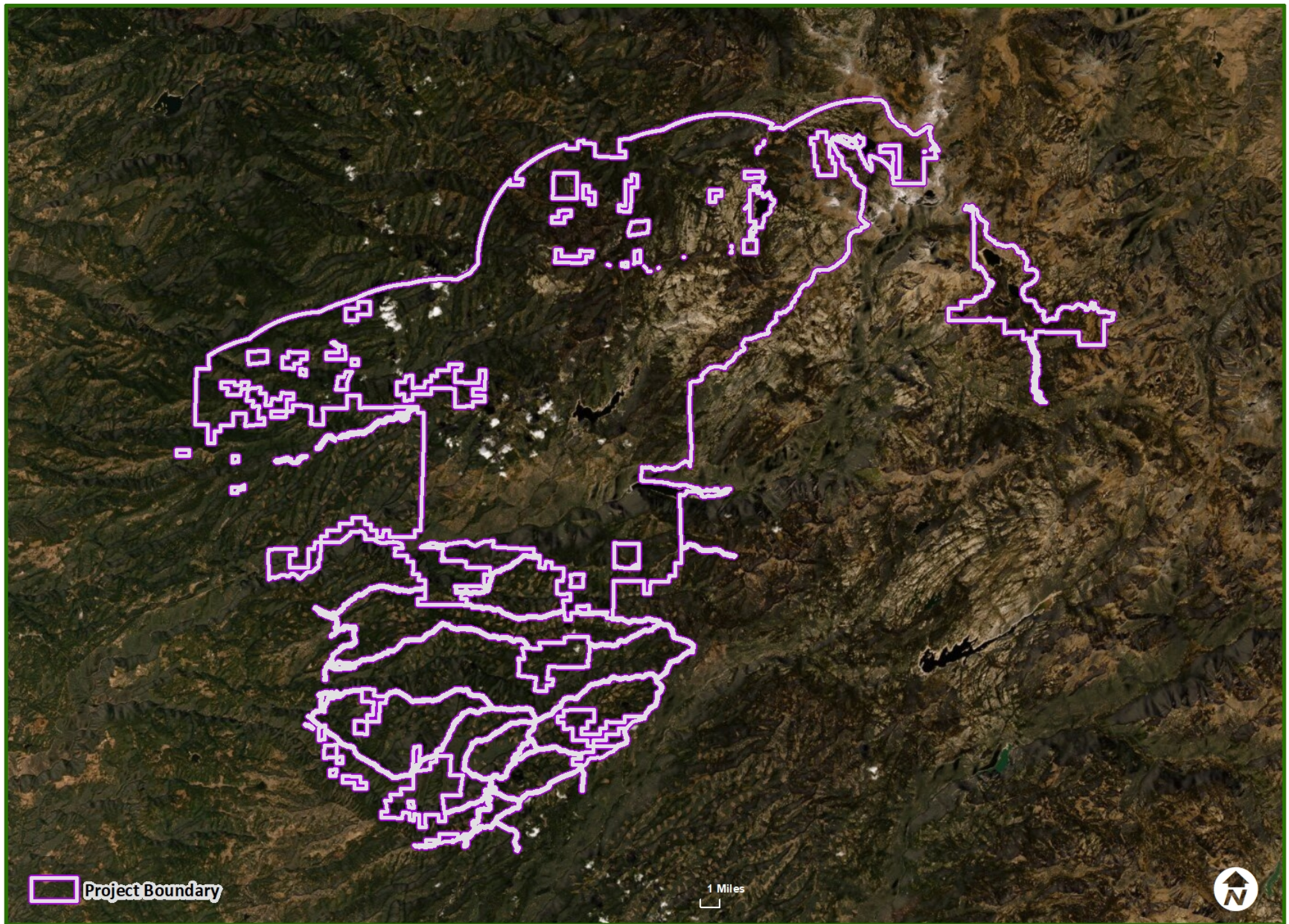
-  Project Boundary (Primary Map)
-  Other Projects (Primary Map)
-  Project Location (Regional Map)
-  1 North Subregion
-  2 North Central Subregion
-  3 Central Subregion
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-  6 South Subregion





**1280 Forest Projects Plan**  
Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority





**1280 Forest Projects Plan**  
Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority



# Notice of Exemption

## Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205  
Auburn, CA 95603

Project Title: Forest Projects Plan (SNC 1280)

Project Location – Specific: Upper Mokelumne River Watershed upstream of Pardee Reservoir

Project Location - City: West Point, Volcano, Jackson, Pioneer, and Murphys

Project Location - Counties: Amador, Calaveras, Alpine

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed Forest Projects Plan is a landscape-level, NEPA/CEQA planning project located within the upper Mokelumne watershed on lands administered by the Calaveras Ranger District on the Stanislaus National Forest and the Amador Ranger District on the Eldorado National Forest. The project involves the initial steps of the NEPA process, specifically the development of the proposed action through scoping and issues analysis. This plan will address a large landscape area that will be refined to identify a minimum of 10,000 acres of the highest priority fuels treatment areas. This project is proposed by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMRWA), a Joint Powers Agency (JPA) comprised of six water agencies and the counties of Amador, Calaveras and Alpine.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies)

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies, of the CEQA Guidelines. This project involves only the planning studies for possible future actions which the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board has not approved, adopted, or funded. The planning project does not require the preparation of a Negative Declaration or Environmental Improvement Report but does require consideration of environmental factors. The project is also Categorically exempt under CEQA Section 15306, Information Collection (Class 6), because it consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The proposed activities are for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Shannon Ciotti

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 906-7345

**If filed by applicant: N/A**

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: Deputy Executive Officer

Signed by Lead Agency: Yes

Signed by Applicant: No

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

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

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

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## Agenda Item 8: Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Award Recommendations

### **Background**

California voters passed Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for all Act of 2018, on June 5, 2018. Proposition 68 includes two allocations of funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC):

- Section 80135(c) allocates \$25 million for competitive grants towards implementation of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) for projects related to forest health and climate resiliency, and
- Section 80110(b)(9) allocates \$30 million for purposes consistent with SNC's governing statute.

The Budget Act of 2020 appropriated \$5 million to SNC for local assistance from Section 80110(b)(9) dedicated to conservancy purposes. In June 2020, the Board authorized grant guidelines for the following programs with the associated funding distribution:

- \$3 million for Forest and Watershed Health
- \$1 million for Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- \$1 million for Vibrant Recreation and Tourism

### ***Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program***

The program aims to support innovative, collaborative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increased access to public lands in the Sierra Nevada Region. The focus of the program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21 and FY 2021-22 is to support existing recreation and tourism collaboratives and encourage the establishment of new collaboratives by planning for and implementing multi-benefit recreation and tourism projects developed through a collaborative process. Projects must fall within one of the focus areas below to be considered for funding:

1. Collaborative Project Implementation - Implementation of capital improvement projects designed by a collaborative group organized specifically for the purpose of recreation and tourism. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as recreation infrastructure with water quality benefits or recreation with habitat protection.
2. Collaborative Project Planning - Support the establishment or capacity-building of collaboratives through grants which result in the identification, prioritization, and preparation for capital improvement projects. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as recreation infrastructure with water quality benefits or recreation with habitat protection.

Designed as a directed grant program, SNC staff works closely with local partners to identify and develop projects. Concept proposals and subsequent full proposals are evaluated on a quarterly basis.



## **Current Status**

The SNC staff is working closely with local partners to develop Vibrant Recreation and Tourism projects. There is one project which has been evaluated through SNC's directed grants process and is recommended for Board approval. This is the first project to be recommended under the current Vibrant Recreation and Tourism grant program.

*Project #1279-RT*  
*Colby Mountain Recreation Area*  
*Butte County Resource Conservation District*  
*\$221,000*

The Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD) will complete a trail plan, including environmental compliance, for a trail originating in Butte County that traverses the Lassen National Forest in Lassen County and into Tehama and Plumas counties. The trail is an extension of the SNC-funded Connected Communities regional plan for the Lost Sierra Route, is on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land, and was added at the request of the USFS. The project will plan for the development of over 40 miles of new, non-motorized trails, an environmental education facility and interpretive trail, expanded trailhead amenities that also serve as support emergency response efforts, and improved connectivity of existing trails. The BCRCD led a collaborative planning process that culminated in the Butte County Trails Plan naming the Colby Mountain Recreation Area among the highest priority projects in the region. The project offers holistic solutions for long-standing issues with unauthorized trail creation and conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation in this region and will create new, legal access from the parking area to an extensive network of trails in the vicinity. This new trail system will directly increase user fees generated by the two nearby USFS campgrounds, as well as improve revenues for local restaurants, retailers, inns, and cabin rentals in Butte Meadows and Jonesville. Additional collaborative partners include Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship, Chico Velo, and the Northern California Regional Land Trust.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Section 15262 of Title 14 (Feasibility and Planning Studies).

- [Access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption \(Project #1279-RT\)](#)

## **Next Steps**

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

Staff will continue to work with partners to develop additional Vibrant Recreation and Tourism projects and anticipates recommending projects at future Board meetings to award the full amount of funds available. If the recommended grant presented in this report is authorized, a minimum of \$779,000 is available for future awards under the current appropriation.

## **Recommendation**

**Staff recommends the Board authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the *Colby Mountain Recreation Area* project (1279-RT), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$221,000 to the Butte County Resource Conservation District, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**

## Exhibit A

### Sierra Nevada Conservancy Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Grant Program SNC Project Number 1279-RT

**SNC ID Number:** 1279-RT

**Applicant:** Butte County Resource Conservation District

**Project Title:** Colby Mountain Recreation Area

**SNC Subregion:** North Central

**Counties:** Butte, Tehama, Plumas

**Funding Amount Requested:** \$221,000

**Funding Amount Recommended:** \$221,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$271,000

**Funding Authority:** Proposition 68, Chapter 8, Section 80110(b)(9)

#### **Project Scope / Description**

Submitted by the Butte County Resource Conservation District (BCRCD), the Colby Mountain Recreation Area Project is a trail planning project originating in Butte County that traverses the Lassen National Forest into Tehama and Plumas counties. As part of the Connected Communities regional plan for the Lost Sierra Route, it will serve as the westernmost point of a new trans-Sierra connection linking Butte Meadows, Jonesville, and Chester and is entirely on public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

The project will plan for the development of over 40 miles of new, non-motorized trail, an environmental education facility and interpretive trail, expanded trailhead amenities that also support emergency response efforts, and improved connectivity with existing OHV (off-highway vehicle) trails. Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) funding will support trail planning and layout of the trail from Jonesville to Chester; preparation of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for the Colby Mountain Recreation Area; archeological and biological resource surveys for the Recreation Area; formal community outreach and engagement prior to, and throughout the NEPA process; development of a local technical advisory committee, a volunteer contribution tracking structure, informational materials, and development of a final project design package. The BCRCD led a collaborative planning process that culminated in the Butte County Trails Plan naming the Colby Mountain Recreation Area among the highest priority projects in the region.

The project is an extension of the SNC-funded Connected Communities planning project in Plumas, Sierra, and Lassen counties. Added at the request of the Almanor District Ranger (Lassen National Forest) and the USFS Region 5 Trail and Travel

Management Program Leader, the project offers holistic solutions for long-standing issues with unauthorized trail creation and conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation in this region and will create new, legal access from the parking area to an extensive network of existing trails in the vicinity. This new trail system will directly increase user fees generated by the two nearby USFS campgrounds, as well as improve revenues for local restaurants, retailers, inns, and cabin rentals in Butte Meadows and Jonesville.

The BCRCD has an experienced staff of resource experts including biologists, planners, and recreation specialists who collectively bring over 40 years of experience to the organization. The BCRCD team has experience completing similar recreational trail-related projects with a collaborative focus, including the development of the Butte County Trails Plan, adopted by the Butte County Board of Supervisors in 2018, and was developed by a working group of diverse trail users. The BCRCD will serve as the CEQA Lead Agency for this project and will work with the Lassen National Forest to complete NEPA on the Colby Mountain section.

In collaboration with Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship, the plan for the Chester- Jonesville system connection, as well as the local trail system in Jonesville, has been led by a coalition of Butte County-based organizations: the BCRCD, Chico Velo, and Northern California Regional Land Trust. The coalition members envision the local trail system enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism in Butte County, revitalizing the Camp Fire-impacted economy, and improving quality of life for local residents who are rebuilding their lives in the wake of tragedy. This project leverages the contributions of Chico Velo and the Friesen Foundation for initial layout and planning.

The Colby Mountain Recreation Project directly addresses Proposition 68's recognition of recreation and tourism's critical importance to California. The project will expand the recreational economy of the region and provide new opportunities for business recovery and development. The project aligns with at least two of the strategies identified in SNC's Strategic Plan by aiming to identify, create, and participate in partnerships to support the development of vibrant recreation and tourism (Strategy 2). It also seeks to provide assistance to pilot projects or collaboratives that test innovative governance, finance, and implementation tools that can achieve sustainable recreation and tourism objectives through exploring expanded recreation uses and providing recreation access for fire-stricken communities (Strategy 5). Colby Mountain serves several disadvantaged rural communities and is less than 30 minutes away from towns devastated by the 2018 Camp Fire.

## Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Progress reports	Every 6 months
Contracting and consultant oversight	On-going
Coordination meetings with USFS	On-going
Trail planning and layout Trail layout for Colby Mountain trails (match)	July 2021 – August 2021
Trail planning and layout Trail feasibility and layout for Connected Communities Linkage	July 2021 – November 2022
Trail planning and layout Assembly/formatting of final project design package	July 2021 – December 2022
Outreach and engagement Connected Communities public survey/community outreach	July 2021 – August 2021
Outreach and engagement Development of technical advisory committee outreach materials and volunteer structure	July 2021 – On-going
Outreach and engagement Development of informational materials/project design package	December 31, 2021
Environmental planning USFS public scoping for Colby Mountain trails	August 31, 2021
Environmental planning Resource surveys and specialist reports	November 30, 2021
Environmental planning NEPA draft/CEQA document	December 31, 2021
Environmental planning Public comment period	January 31, 2022
Environmental planning USFS signed decision/filing CEQA	March 31, 2022
Grant close-out with SNC	November 30, 2022
<b>Estimated Project Completion Date</b>	<b>December 31, 2022</b>

## Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project management and oversight	\$12,400
Contractual: NEPA/CEQA documents and resource surveys	\$142,000
Contractual: Trail design, ground proofing, and GIS map development: Chester-Jonesville Linkage (SBTS)	\$19,000
Contractual: Development of informational materials and final design package (NCRLT)	\$4,000
Community outreach and development of tech. advisory committee/volunteer structure (collaboration)	\$40,000
Administrative Costs	3,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$221,000</b>

## Project Letters of Support or Opposition

### *Support:*

- Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship (Partner)
- Northern California Regional Land Trust (Partner)
- Chico Velo (Partner)
- Butte County Land Use Coordinating Committee
- Jonesville Cabin Owners Inc.
- Butte Meadows Jonesville Community Association
- Sierra Nevada Brewing Company
- CSU Chico Associated Students – Adventure Outings
- North Rim Adventure Sports
- North State Composite High School Mountain Bike Team
- Intrepid Adventures

### *Opposition:*

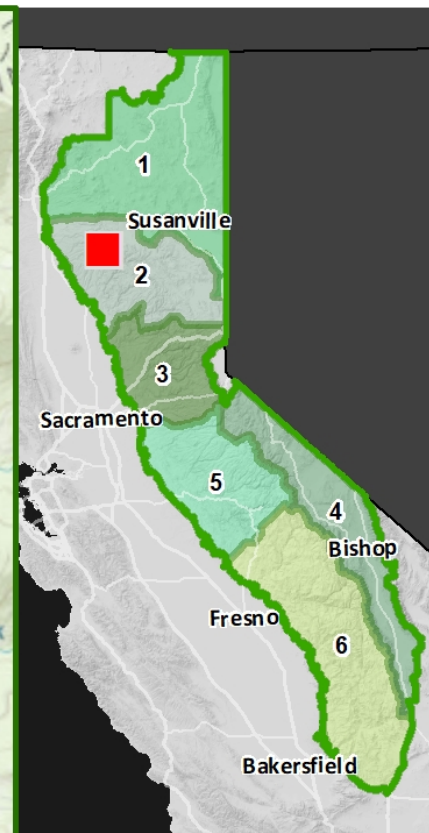
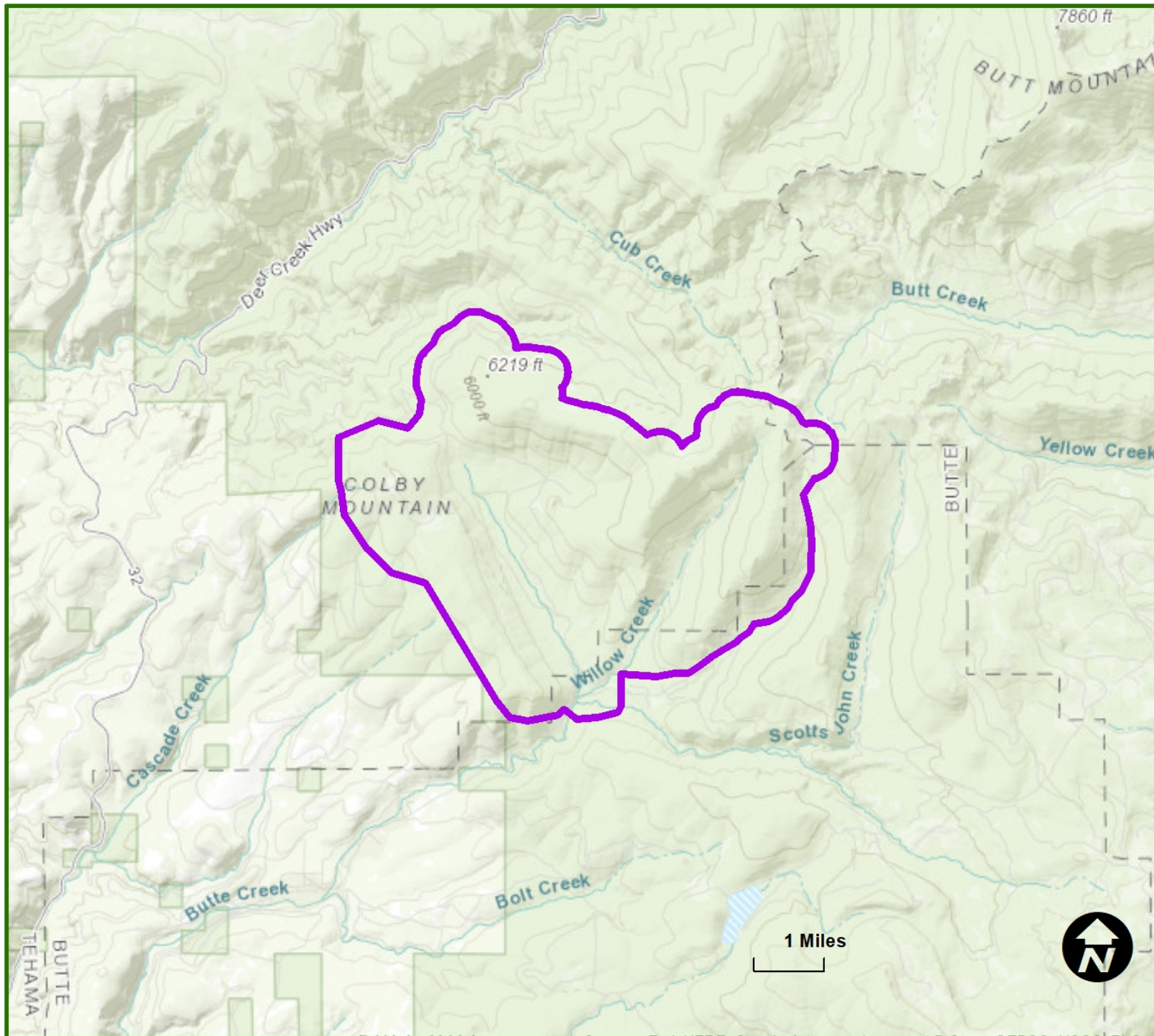
- No opposition letters received









## 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.

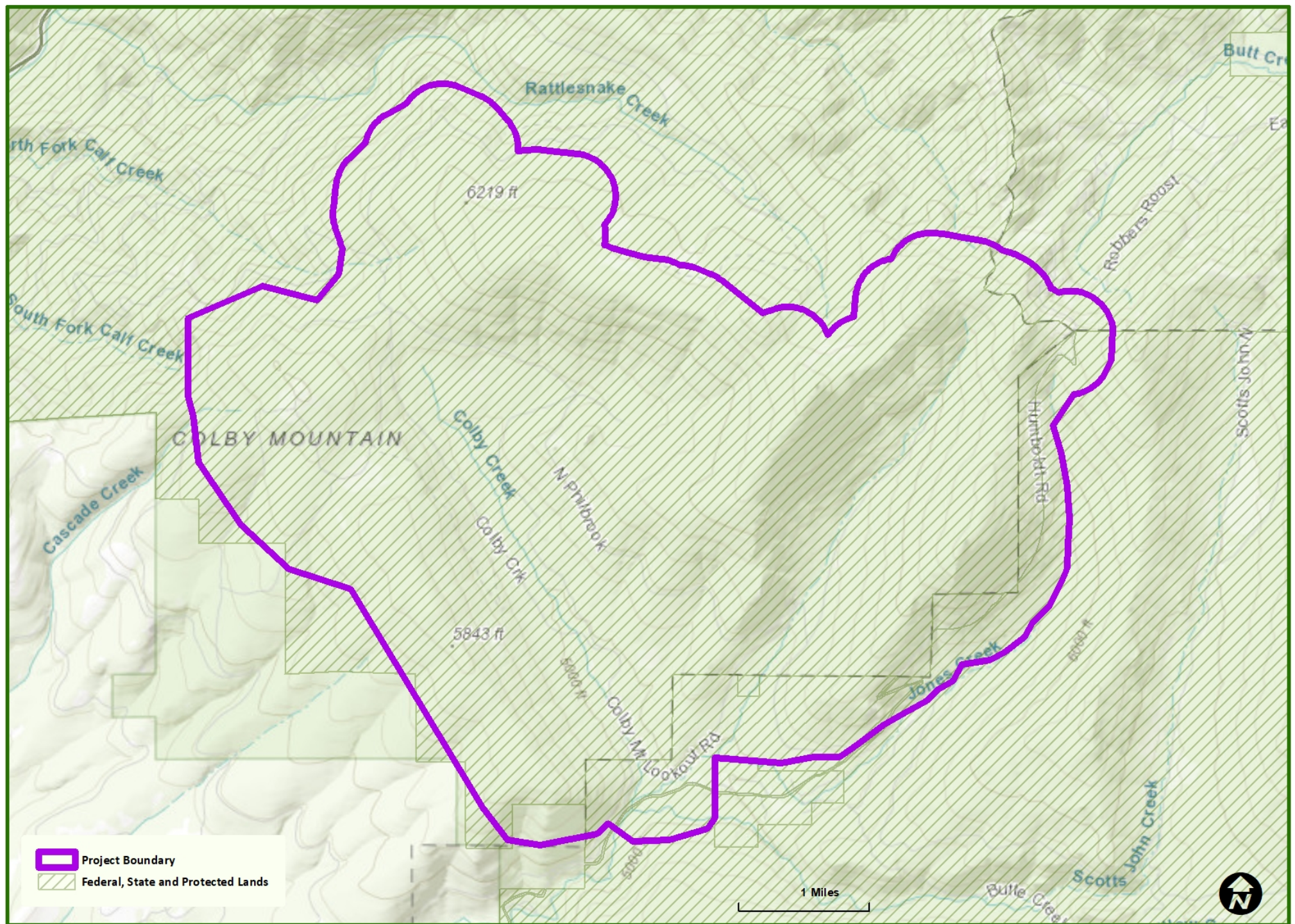
- Number of collaboratively developed plans and assessments





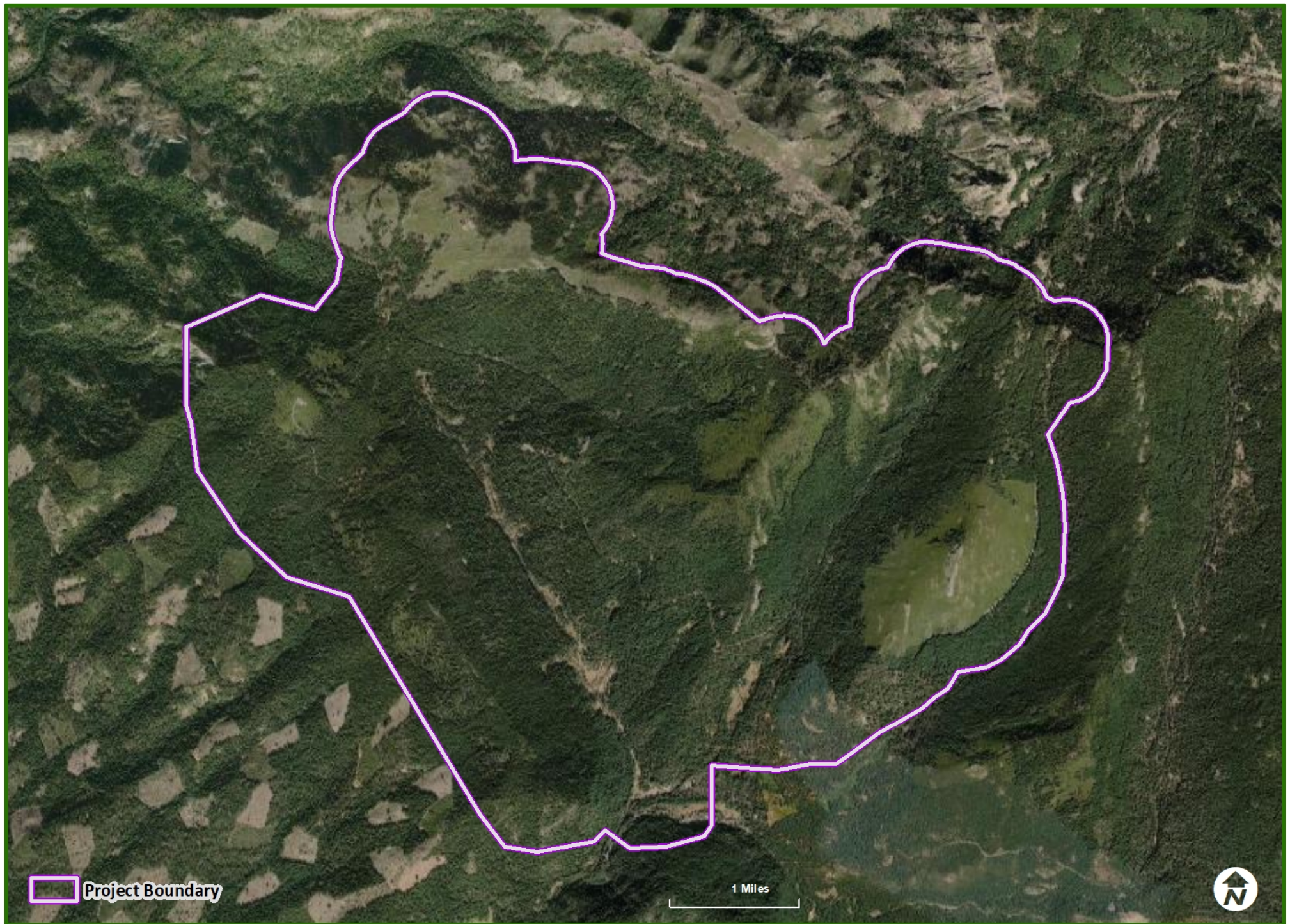
-  Project Boundary (Primary Map)
-  Project Location (Regional Map)
-  1 North Subregion
-  2 North Central Subregion
-  3 Central Subregion
-  4 East Subregion
-  5 South Central Subregion
-  6 South Subregion





**1279-RT Colby Mountain Recreation Area**  
**Butte County Resource Conservation District**





**1279-RT Colby Mountain Recreation Area**  
**Butte County Resource Conservation District**

# Notice of Exemption

## Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205  
Auburn, CA 95603

Project Title: Colby Mountain Recreation Area Planning (SNC1279-RT)

Project Location – Specific: Jonesville to Chester, CA and Colby Mountain

Project Location - City: Jonesville, CA  
Counties

Project Location - County: Butte, Tehama and Plumas

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

This project will complete the trail planning and layout of the connected communities trail from Jonesville to Chester; complete surveys on the Colby Mountain trail network located in Jonesville; develop an advisory board and volunteer corps representing the communities around Jonesville; and conduct outreach to and engagement of Jonesville residents and stakeholders as part of the Connected Communities network, including gathering public input about recreational needs and a vision for trails in the community. The planning project will collect all information needed and complete all analysis required for NEPA and CEQA decisions. In the wake of the Camp Fire and the massive displacement of Paradise Ridge residents to surrounding communities, the need for this project became critical, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only increased traffic on degraded local trail systems as the closures of gyms and other social spaces have motivated many urban residents to look for new places to exercise and recreate safely with friends, family, and pets. Improved access to open space and outdoor activities in the wake of the Camp Fire, as is proposed with this project, is an important factor in retaining existing or displaced area residents by increasing regional quality of life and stabilizing property values.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Butte County Resource Conservation District

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies)

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262 Feasibility and Planning Studies. This project involves only the planning studies for possible future actions which the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board has not approved, adopted, or funded. This planning project does not require the preparation of a Negative Declaration or Environmental Improvement Report but does require consideration of environmental factors. The project is also Categorically exempt under CEQA Section 15306 Information Collection (Class 6) because it consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The proposed activities are for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Shannon Ciotti

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 906-7345

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: Deputy Executive Officer

Signed by Lead Agency: Yes

Signed by Applicant: No

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

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

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



**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## **Agenda Item 9: 2020-21 Action Plan Reporting**

### **Background**

At the December 2018 Board Meeting, the Board approved the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, *Securing California's Environmental and Economic Future: Protecting and Restoring the Health and Resilience of Sierra Nevada Watersheds and Communities*. At the same meeting, the Board approved its companion document, the 2019-2020 Implementation Plan (Action Plan). This Action Plan served as an initial prioritization of activities for the first 18 months, January 2019 through June 30, 2020. Subsequent Action Plans are intended to cover a single fiscal year, from July 1 through June 30. It was agreed that a report on the outcome of the prior 12-18 months would be presented each June, allowing the Board to understand major actions taken and accomplishments achieved for the Strategic Plan reporting period covered under each Action Plan.

The Strategic Plan defined SNC's five Regional goals: healthy watersheds and forests, resilient Sierra Nevada communities, vibrant recreation and tourism, strategic lands conserved, and impactful Regional identity. Six cross-cutting strategic elements were identified that guided development of the Action Plan. These strategic elements are needs assessment, developing partnerships and resources, funding and investments, policy, design and field test new ways of doing business, and communications/telling the story.

The Strategic Plan guides the operations of the SNC, and the yearly Action Plans identify both the core functions of each SNC division along with specific activities that will be of major focus and/or will be accomplished within the next year. The Action Plans are created to keep momentum around achieving Strategic Plan goals, but they are also designed to allow for flexibility so that SNC can remain nimble and responsive to opportunities and challenges as they develop.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Action Plan Implementation**

The 2020-21 Action Plan was approved by the Board shortly after we began to see the full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to SNC operations, and how we work with our Regional, state, and federal partners. Even though we started the year off with so many unknowns, it is remarkable to look back at this past year to see just how much was accomplished given the sudden pivot to remote work by all staff. Shifting back to our prior way of doing business, or even to a more modern take on the way we will operate going forward, it will continue to take time and effort in this coming year to ensure we manage within set protocols to keep staff and partners safe and healthy. However, as the report-out on the 2020-21 Action Plan demonstrates, even with the challenges of responding to COVID-19, SNC still made great progress on elevating the needs of our Region and in bringing in resources to support the economic, environmental, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada and its communities.

## **Current Status – Report Out on Major Achievements in 2020-21**

The 2020-21 fiscal year began with much uncertainty: SNC operations had moved to remote work for an indefinite amount of time, the state's economic forecasts were concerning; and COVID's impact on the legislative process meant scaled back hearings on bills, some of which would have impacted SNC and resources for the Region. However, the fiscal year is ending in a much different place, with increased confidence in our ability to deliver despite new ways of working. There is also new momentum for implementing projects in our Region as we prepare for and roll out SNC programs, communicate on our progress and share outcomes, and coordinate with other programs that fund work in our Region.

As we wrap up the fiscal year, SNC is poised to initiate and deliver on many important activities that will continue to benefit the Region and the broader goals of the state. In addition to performing the core duties of organizational management, program administration, project management, policy, outreach, and communications, staff delivered on the 45 specific actions called out in the 2020-21 Action Report. Two actions were impacted by travel restrictions due to COVID-19: hosting in-Region educational tours for legislators and policy decisionmakers and holding CEQA/NEPA trainings throughout the Region. However, SNC staff continued to cultivate relationships and inform on Regional issues virtually, and SNC connected partners to online trainings and workshops as they were offered via the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) collaborations and other networks.

The 2020-21 Action Report includes actions for each SNC division, which were identified to further progress on the SNC 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and fall within its framing structure of the six cross-cutting strategic elements. Each division was responsible for carrying out actions that could be completed within the fiscal year, but also for many actions that carry forward beyond the end of the reporting period. Actions varied in scope and size, such as the completion of essential desk manuals, the launch of new grant programs, support for planning and capacity building, and the deployment of new tools to communicate our work across audiences.

The following presents highlighted achievements from the 2020-21 Action Plan across our organization. Although these accomplishments are organized by division, most actions required effort by staff across all units in the organization and represent a shared success to achieving much in an unusual and challenging year.

### ***Executive Team***

- The SNC strengthened cross-Agency partnerships and coordination, resulting in SNC's inclusion in the Wildfire and Forest Resilience budget package, which brings increased funding for SNC programs and for other state programs that may grant funds to SNC to administer throughout our Region.
- The Executive Team also continued to build relationships with external partners and to present on Regional needs at various events, such as the Public Policy

Institute of California's Funding for Headwaters virtual event, the California Foundation for Environment and Economy's (CFEE) event on wildfires, and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) annual conference in Spring 2021. The SNC's policy staff also participated in key events throughout the Region, elevating SNC's work around Regional issues.

- Leadership enabled a successful transition to remote work, while providing for the safety and well-being of SNC staff. This effort has been on-going and evolving, with respect to participating in regular task force meetings, responding to drills and direction from state control agencies, interpreting Executive Orders, tracking costs associated with the pandemic, keeping staff informed, and implementing various administrative processes related to timekeeping, safety, equipment, travel, reporting, and various other organizational impacts.
- Following the Board's direction, the Executive Team initiated an effort to assess how lessons learned from the Watershed Improvement Program's pilot project in the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) might be applied across the Region to increase pace and scale of ecological forest management. The SNC executed a contract with Spatial Informatics Group (SIG), who performed a high-level review of TCSI work to date and the role SNC currently plays in the Region. The SIG recommendations were reported to the Board at the March 2021 Board Meeting, and this activity will carry forward into the next fiscal year as SNC considers the recommendations and determines any next steps that SNC could implement to support resilience more strategically in the Sierra Nevada.

### *Field Operations and Grants*

- Proposition 68 Programs: The SNC staff launched three new grant programs, funded by Proposition 68. These directed programs are: Forest Health, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, and Recreation & Tourism, which accepts grant applications on a rolling basis and are evaluated quarterly. By June 30, 2021, staff anticipates that SNC will have awarded five Forest Health grants totaling \$640,581 and one Recreation and Tourism grant totaling \$221,000 and will have multiple other projects, across all three programs, in development. (It is important to note that the intention of these programs was to have the funding extend over FY 2020-21 and FY 2021-22.)
- Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Health Program: Although not included in the 2020-21 Action Plan because events unfolded during the course of the year, staff immediately responded as SNC became aware of potential opportunities for increased funding in the current fiscal year. Staff very quickly worked with partners to identify a list of potential "shovel-ready" projects throughout our Region, which was essential to demonstrating need as budget decisions were being made. The Field Operations and Grants team developed a new local assistance grant program, including program guidelines, documents, and processes. The SNC Board adopted the guidelines in March 2021, and the program was launched upon budget appropriation in April 2021. Staff is preparing to bring projects for approval to a July 2021 Board Meeting. Staff is

also in the process of preparing program materials relevant to the proposed Budget Year funding that would become available in July 2021.

- Reimbursements: The SNC continued to successfully manage several reimbursement grants (where SNC is the grantee administering subgrants for projects in our Region.) These are funded by various programs and funding sources, such as CAL FIRE California Climate Investments and the Plumas National Forest Good Neighbor Agreement. As the projects progress, status updates are provided to the Board.

## *Policy and Outreach*

### **Partnerships and Community Support:**

- At the beginning of FY 2020-21, the SNC had awarded subgrants to support capacity across the Region via a \$1.9 million grant from the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). Staff has successfully administered 11 RFFCP subgrants to ongoing projects, has developed two new subgrants to support coordination work related to the Assembly Bill 2551 spatial planning effort, and is working on two more subgrants with Maidu Summit Consortium and the Pit River Tribe. Through the course of this year, the RFFCP has become a key program in the state's efforts to coordinate around wildfire prevention and watershed resilience. The RFFCP also received a current year budget augmentation and is proposed to receive budget year funding as well, which the Program will again grant out to Regional entities. As a Regional entity and due to the strategic approach and successful delivery on the initial grant, SNC is anticipating future RFFCP funding to build on and scale out essential planning and capacity work.
- Staff created an internal tribal engagement workgroup; developed a menu of options for tribal engagement and are now exploring implementation of those ideas. Tribal engagement capacity assessments were completed by all SNC staff to identify training and support that may be needed to engage more effectively with tribes. Steps are being taken now to identify and secure training on topics of cultural sensitivity and history of Native American tribes in California. Additionally, staff updated its tribal contacts list, fortified grant program language to encourage tribal engagement, and reviewed best practices. Overall, SNC is deepening its relationships to tribes to better support their work in forest health, cultural burning, and workforce development programs.
- Staff continued to provide technical support to Regional partners, including holding nine grant-writing workshops (and quickly pivoting to a virtual format shortly after the pandemic started). Staff explored a RISE grant opportunity and is continuing to support application concepts through in-Region partners and held initial discussion with the Office of Emergency Services on Hazard Mitigation & Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities funding opportunities. Staff also continued to participate as part of the Biomass/Bioenergy Financing group

to share opportunities for increasing financing, including loans, grants, and private investments.

**Communications:**

- Staff launched Sierra Spotlight – SNC's virtual newsroom – with 20 posts completed to date since launch. The SNC has begun integrating Spotlight posts into other segments of the SNC website, like our What We Do page, to help illustrate our work and keep evergreen pages fresh with new content. Staff also completed and launched significant upgrades to the What We Do page and Key Issues pages, and fully integrated a social media plug-in on the website to make content sharing simple for visitors.
- The SNC launched Constant Contact and built out four SNC-branded templates and outreach lists for regular correspondence (Capacity Newsletter, SNC announcements, press release, & Spotlight Digest). The SNC also automated its subscription process through the website. Outreach in 2020 shifted to virtual only due to COVID. Staff created a social media outreach campaign focused on the 2020 fire season, the broad range of benefits provided by the Sierra Nevada Region, and SNC project work. Animated communications products reached and were reshared by influential partners and state agency leaders, and SNC “followers” experienced steady growth across social media platforms.

**Science & GIS:**

- Staff provided key science, mapping, and data support relevant to SNC work deliverables and in coordination with larger state efforts. Staff participated as part of a technical review team in a variety of science and planning processes: the TCSI science and pace & scale workgroups, and the AB 2551 spatial planning and Natural and Working Lands strategy efforts, both led by California Natural Resources Agency.
- To support biomass utilization efforts in the Region, staff provided technical assistance to partners and policy makers. To highlight the work around this issue, staff organized and hosted SNC’s 2021 Watershed Improvement Summit in March, focused on developing a restoration economy in the Sierra Nevada by highlighting the role of wood products and biomass utilization in pursuing forest and economic development goals.

**Policy and Legislation:**

- Staff developed and strengthened relationships with legislators and policy decision-makers to inform on Regional issues and held “meet & greets” with all SNC legislative liaisons to explore interests and ways to amplify Regional needs. Staff hosted multiple discussion forums among state leadership and external stakeholders to support information sharing and collaboration around key policy issues that impact the Sierra Nevada Region.

### *Administrative Services*

- The SNC's Employee Recognition Program (ERP) was designed and launched, supported by a SharePoint site that shares information, recognizes employees for their service, and fosters team building. The site is linked to SNC's Safety and Wellness site. The ERP activities have also been incorporated into regular all staff meetings and highlighted at various times through the year.
- Staff made major progress on updating procedures, desk manuals, succession planning, and implementing digital work processes. With new staff on-boarding, and potential retirements in the months ahead, staff focused on organizing and updating materials to ensure core work processes and procedures are maintained during times of transition.
- Staff successfully transitioned quickly from holding our standard in-Region Board Meetings to a virtual venue. This required an understanding of and training on new technology and public noticing requirements, and updating timelines, processes, and checklists. Staff also incorporated virtual platform "dry runs" and provided troubleshooting before and during Board Meetings.

### **Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.**



**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2021**

## **Agenda Item 10: 2021-22 Action Plan Update**

### **Background**

At the December 2018 Board Meeting, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board approved the SNC 2019-2023 Strategic Plan Securing California's Environmental and Economic Future: Protecting and Restoring the Health and Resilience of Sierra Nevada Watersheds and Communities. Within the timeframe of the five-year Strategic Plan, the Board adopts Action Plans to prioritize activities over the coming months. The first Action Plan, approved at the same December 2018 Board Meeting at which the Strategic Plan was adopted, spanned an 18-month period, wrapping up on June 30, 2020. The Board now approves Actions Plans each June to prioritize activities over the coming Fiscal Year (July-June). Last June, the Board approved the 2020-21 Action Plan, which guides SNC work through June 30, 2021.

### **Current Status**

The attached 2021-22 Action Plan (Attachment A) has been developed for Board consideration and approval. Guided by leadership from the Governing Board, the Executive Team and SNC staff prepared this plan to provide structure, priorities, and focus for carrying out SNC's mission and goals as outlined in the 2019-23 Strategic Plan over the next 12 months.

In order to respond to Regional needs effectively and efficiently, some of which might be unanticipated as a new year begins, the Action Plans are designed to leave room for flexibility and enable staff to respond to emerging issues. While keeping SNC moving forward within the framework of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, the Action Plan for this coming fiscal year also reflects current issues, such as the preparing for post-COVID operations, as well as the immediate rolling out of the forest health and watershed resilience funding that was appropriated in the current year budget and proposed in the budget year.

The Action Plan is designed to recognize the core functions within each SNC Division to capture the ongoing, important work that the SNC staff does to keep programs operating and in alignment with state and Regional policies and priorities. Core functions also reflect critical skill sets and existing programs that can be built on to meet emerging needs. The Action Plan also identifies "stand-alone" actions to call out specific projects, events, or efforts that staff will implement over the next 12 months in addition to the core functions.

The core functions and actions outlined in the 2021-22 Action Plan will keep staff focused on meeting the goals outlined in the 2019-23 Strategic Plan, while also allowing SNC to adapt to, and effectively respond to, new opportunities, issues, needs, policies, and priorities.

### **Next Steps**

If approved, staff will begin implementation of the Action Plan commencing July 1, 2021.

### **Recommendation**

**Staff recommends that the Board approve the draft 2021-22 Action Plan and direct staff to take the necessary actions for its successful implementation.**



SIERRA NEVADA  
CONSERVANCY

**2021–2022 Action Plan**

The following activities represent the work the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) plans to focus on over the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021–22 timeframe. However, SNC strives to be responsive to the needs of the Region and will continue to adjust to changes in needs resulting from COVID-19, post-Covid-19 transition, or other urgent issues, as appropriate.

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## INTRODUCTION

The [Sierra Nevada Conservancy's 2019–2024 Strategic Plan](#) (Strategic Plan), Securing California's Environmental and Economic Future: Protecting and Restoring the Health and Resilience of Sierra Nevada Watersheds and Communities established the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) as SNC's overarching initiative.

The WIP's innovative and holistic approach to building watershed and community resilience focuses on five Regional Goals, as outlined in the SNC Strategic Plan:

- Healthy Watersheds and Forests
- Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- Vibrant Recreation & Tourism
- Strategic Lands Conserved
- Impactful Regional Identity

The five Regional Goals of the Strategic Plan, and the actions identified in this plan, continue to build on SNC's work as a funder, supporter, and collaborator around critical capacity-building, planning, and project implementation efforts aimed at improving the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the SNC Region. The Action Plan is designed to focus SNC's work so that it can respond well to Regional needs, as well as align with the goals and priorities of state policymakers. The Action Plan is also written with flexibility in mind, given unanticipated opportunities and challenges that may materialize in the months ahead.

### Structure

The following activities represent the Action Plan for next Fiscal Year – July 2021 to June 2022. In addition to making progress towards the Strategic Plan's Regional Goals, the actions taken over the next twelve months will be focused through three internal organizational priorities: serving the Region, bringing funding into the Region and to SNC programs, and ensuring that SNC operations are well managed and continues to be a great place to work.

It is also important to keep in mind that while the following activities are listed by the separate teams at the SNC, active coordination and collaboration between all of them are necessary to achieve agency, Regional, and state objectives. The statute that created the SNC emphasizes the importance of carrying out its mission and goals in an integrated and complementary manner – and that is how the staff plans to accomplish the SNC 2021–2022 Action Plan.



## EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Executive Leadership is responsible for the overall success of the SNC.

All strategic priorities, agency goals, and organizational structure – through support and approval of the Governing Board – are organized and laid out by Executive Leadership. Executive Leadership also enhances the internal efficiency and effectiveness of the agency in order to optimize business opportunities and development.

In addition, Executive Leadership builds and maintains relationships that are core to the success of the SNC, such as positive rapport with the Board; state legislators; key legislative staff; policy decision makers and influencers; state, federal, county, and local governmental agencies; and vital public and private partners. Executive staff members are the face and voice of the SNC at the legislative, state, and local government levels, are responsible for informing state and federal policy and decision makers of the importance of the Sierra Nevada to the state of California, and maximize the role of SNC in decisions that affect the Region’s environmental and economic well-being.

### Core Functions—Executive Leadership

#### Executive Team

##### *Organizational Leadership and Strategic Program Direction*

Executive Leadership sets direction and priorities for SNC staff and programs, with support and approval of the Board, to optimize internal operations and maximize external impact. This is accomplished by keeping staff members well informed of policy and issues affecting both the Region and the SNC, as well as offering a supportive workplace that empowers employees. Executive Leadership continues to help the SNC set and achieve major milestones.

##### *Policy Engagement and Development*

Executive Leadership engages on legislation, policies, and programs that fit SNC’s mission and the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. The staff stays informed on federal and state actions and trends, as well as work/news of partner involvement, to determine how SNC may support and/or enhance respective efforts. Executive Leadership works to optimize SNC’s role in federal and state measures that affect the environmental and economic well-being of the Sierra Nevada, while offering the Conservancy’s expertise and skills as an ideal partner to ensure that vital and necessary on-the-ground work gets accomplished.

### *Policymaker and Partner Relationships*

Developing relationships and strengthening bonds with state policy makers is key to ensuring decision makers are well-informed about the importance of the Sierra Nevada and the SNC. Collaboration with public and private entities at all levels is critical to achieving the goals in the Strategic Plan. Executive Leadership not only establishes the necessary relationships to get Region-wide work accomplished, but also strengthens them. By focusing on building stronger state, federal, and non-governmental partner relations, both in the Region and at the state level, SNC will be positioned as an effective bridge between the state and the Region.

### *State-level Engagement*

Executive Leadership tracks priorities established by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and state-level policy staff. For example, the Secretary has established four primary priorities for departments within the CNRA: climate resilience; biodiversity; community access to parks, recreation, and natural spaces; and how to cut governmental inefficiencies related to completing critical natural resources work. Executive Leadership engages in discussions around these priorities, shares Regional needs and perspectives to inform policymaking, and provides direction to staff on program development and alignment around these priorities as needed.

### *Funding Development*

Executive Leadership seeks consistent and complementary revenue sources that keep the SNC on the front lines of protecting and restoring forest, watershed, and economic health to the critical Sierra Nevada. This is accomplished through developing partnerships and projects with other state and federal agencies and programs, elevating funding needs to funding decision makers, and identifying and sharing opportunities for investment in the Region.

### *Fiscal Management and Operations*

Executive Leadership safeguards the long-term stability and sustainability of the SNC organization by ensuring that the Conservancy's budget and resources are well managed, with proper oversight and transparency.

## **Actions—Executive Leadership**

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions of Executive Leadership, the staff plans to focus on actions in the following areas during FY 2021–22:

1. Per Board direction, SNC will continue to develop and apply a framework that drives pace and scale of ecological forest management and restoration across the Region. Building on work from the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative pilot project, and from recommendations presented in the Spatial Informatics Group's (SIG) report, *"Waypoints on the Road to Resilience: Considerations for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy,"* Executive Leadership will explore how SNC's organization, at all levels, can best support resilience on the landscape by looking closely at the components of the work (and how they relate to each other) to identify approaches, tools, or process improvements that will improve SNC's ability to meet the needs of the Region and the state.
2. Given the anticipated impacts of COVID-19, focus SNC priorities and operations to ensure health and well-being of staff and the public, fiscal stability of the department, and a safe transition back to post-COVID-19 operations.
3. Executive Leadership will identify and work to secure additional funding for the SNC Region through SNC programs or via collaboration and reimbursement grants with partner agencies. Executive Leadership will continue to follow the potential development of the resilience bond, economic stimulus proposals, and/or complementary legislative and budget actions that support work in the Region.
4. Executive Leadership will foster a welcoming agency culture and will explore and implement ways that support principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the organization, such as providing training opportunities to staff, representing SNC to external audiences in an inclusive manner, and updating materials for accessibility, where feasible. In response to the California Natural Resource Agency's priority for "Access for All," Executive Leadership will research and develop a new program concept aimed at broadening access and equity in the Sierra Nevada Region by increasing recreational, educational, and stewardship opportunities for people and communities that may face economic, physical, or societal challenges/barriers with visiting and experiencing the Sierra Nevada Region.
5. Senate Bill 208 (Dahle) would modify SNC's boundaries by adding a portion of Siskiyou County and Trinity County to the Region and increasing the area of Shasta County within the Region. Should the bill be approved through the legislative process, Executive Leadership will lead staff to prepare for the expanded boundary change, identify and request staffing and resource needs, initiate outreach to build relationships with partners in the new area, and develop recommendations to the Legislature regarding organizational changes that may be needed due to the boundary expansion per the legislation's direction.

## FIELD OPERATIONS & GRANTS

The primary function of Field Operations & Grants is to serve the needs of the Sierra Nevada Region. Field Operations & Grants is uniquely positioned to understand Regional issues and be a voice for the Sierra Nevada by maintaining positive working relationships with Regional and statewide partners through active leadership and participation in collaborative groups focused on any of the five Regional Goals identified in the Strategic Plan. This effort leads to Field Operations & Grants designing and developing bond-funded SNC grant programs as well as communicating with Executive Leadership and Policy & Outreach to amplify issues of the Region to state policy makers and decision makers. Additionally, Field Operations & Grants administers and supports projects funded through other state and federal programs.

### Core Functions—Field Operations & Grants

#### Grants & Reimbursements

##### *Grant Program Development and Administration*

Grants & Reimbursements develops and administers grant programs focused on achieving SNC's goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. This includes both competitive-grant and directed-grant programs. All programs are organized and coordinated through the application of guidelines, policies, and processes for the distribution and administration of various state and federal funds. This also involves all aspects of program delivery, such as soliciting requests for proposals, completing application intake and processing, eligibility, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review, project scoring, formal agreement development, and agreement management. Grants & Reimbursements also establishes and maintains long-term monitoring of all closed grants. The staff continuously provides administrative support to Field Operations and Partnerships & Community Support staff engaged in individual project management under these programs.

##### *Reimbursements Program Administration*

Grants & Reimbursements administers what are identified as reimbursements: grants and agreements that are supported by funds other than bonds, such as California Climate Investment and Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program grants. Grants & Reimbursements also assists in the development of the Stewardship Council conservation covenants, administers associated agreements, and supports Field Operations staff conducting annual monitoring. The staff actively builds partnerships within the Sierra Nevada to strategically disperse funds throughout the Region in ways that advance the goals of the funder and SNC's Strategic Plan. Grants & Reimbursements diligently looks to bolster reimbursement grants by seeking additional revenue streams through subgrants, contracts, and general agreements. Grants &



Reimbursements also provides critical administrative support to other SNC departments that implement Reimbursement projects.

## **Field Operations**

### *Collaborative Planning and Project Development*

Field Operations participates in approximately 40 collaborative resource-management groups throughout the Sierra Nevada and staff members lead six of these collaboratives. The purpose of SNC's involvement is to keep track of priorities and trends in the Region to inform state policy and help develop and support the best projects that align with SNC priorities and state and federal funding opportunities. Field Operations adds expertise and capacity in underserved geographies and supports partners' capacity-building efforts. Field Operations also tracks and pursues new opportunities for additional reimbursement agreements and grants that could support the priorities of the Region.

### *Capacity Building and Technical Assistance*

Field Operations assists smaller project-focused partnerships as part of their grant management tasks (see below). In these partnerships, Area Representatives (ARs) are involved in the granular details of accomplishing projects, and this is where much of the on-the-ground troubleshooting and learning occurs.

### *Grant Management*

Field Operations manages SNC's local-support grants, which have historically been SNC's primary grant programs (local-support grants use funds directly allocated to SNC, typically from bond measures). Local-support grants are distinct from reimbursement grants, such as California Climate Investments and Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) grants that SNC receives from other agencies and then regrants to partners. Depending on the source/purpose of the funds, reimbursement grants are managed by Grants & Reimbursements or Partnerships & Community Support.

Grant management includes developing agreements that adequately specify deliverables, schedules, and budgets. To ensure grants are on time and on track, it also includes overseeing progress reports, processing invoices and change requests, conducting site visits, and monitoring projects after completion. Area Representatives spend about 50 percent of their time managing grants, although this can vary widely between Subregions.

Because ARs are deeply involved in numerous projects across the Sierra Nevada, they are uniquely positioned to identify and share best practices. Area Representatives may connect grantees in different geographies that face similar challenges and facilitate information sharing between high-capacity organizations and smaller organizations. They also help partners identify additional funding opportunities, with additional expertise and support provided by Partnerships & Community Support.

## Monitoring

Field Operations monitors completed grants for the term specified by underlying bond legislation to ensure state investments and improvements are maintained. Staff members periodically visit sites and maintain monitoring records. In addition, Field Operations works with the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council to monitor lands transferred from PG&E to the United States Forest Service.

## Actions—Field Operations & Grants

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions of Field Operations & Grants, the staff plans to focus on actions in the following areas:

1. Continue to work with partners to develop up to \$5 million in projects in three program areas: Forest Health, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, and Vibrant Recreation and Tourism. Through negotiations required during the directed-grants process, SNC staff may seek leverage funds (for example, additional contributions from federal land management partners).
2. In April 2021, SNC was appropriated \$20 million in FY 2020-21 General Fund as part of the governor's and Legislature's "early action" wildfire resilience budget package. Staff will implement the SNC's Immediate Action Forest Health directed grants program under guidelines adopted by the Governing Board at the March 2021 meeting.
3. The governor's proposed budget for FY 2021-22 included \$50 million in General Fund to the SNC for wildfire resilience local assistance. Upon any final appropriation received as part of the 2021 Budget, staff will develop new programmatic guidelines. With Board direction and approval, staff will begin implementation of the program throughout the Region.
4. In alignment with the California Natural Resources Agency's priority to "cut green tape," staff will identify practices and measures under CEQA that can be standardized under existing internal processes, in order to streamline and improve administrative efficiencies while assuring the critical protection of California's natural resources. Any recommended changes would be brought before the SNC Governing Board for approval.
5. Staff will provide support for seven currently active reimbursement grants, totaling \$27.6 million for work throughout the Region. Reimbursement grants are grants where SNC serves as the grantee and is reimbursed for work from other state and federal programs. SNC currently manages reimbursement grants from the following programs: CAL FIRE Climate Change Investments, Plumas National Forest Good Neighbor Agreement, a Natural Disaster grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development, and grants from the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. Under these programs SNC administers 34 subgrants to partners throughout the Region.

## POLICY & OUTREACH

The primary functions of Policy & Outreach are to inform policy development and funding direction in order to serve the needs of the Sierra Nevada Region. This is accomplished through tracking and synthesizing the latest trends and scientific studies on forestry, watershed health, organizational capacity, wood utilization, and other relevant issues; utilizing the recommendations and outcomes of relevant research to inform policy development; and sharing those recommendations and outcomes through communication efforts. Staff members focus on educating key decision makers about the importance of the Sierra Nevada Region and the policy and funding needs of the Region. In addition, Policy & Outreach also educates partners in the Region about state policy and program trends to help in-Region efforts and projects align with state goals.

Policy & Outreach also provides strategic direction to special projects and programs that advance science and technology in the Region, build capacity of partner organizations, and explore innovative governance, planning, and project implementation.

Developing and maintaining relationships with legislators and respective staff, state and federal agencies, local governments, Regional partners, the research community, and traditional and non-traditional media contacts is the key to success. In addition, while Policy & Outreach supports all of the Regional Goals in SNC's Strategic Plan, it focuses heavily on the cultivation of an impactful Regional identity for the Sierra Nevada.

### Core Functions—Policy & Outreach

#### Policy

##### *Legislation and Policy Analysis*

Policy focuses on keeping a finger on the pulse of legislation, policies, and programs as well as analyzing the potential impacts to the SNC, its programs, partners, and the Region. Analyses are shared with SNC staff and the Board, policy partners, and the California Natural Resources Agency when appropriate.

##### *Policy Development*

Policy utilizes SNC's Regional expertise to inform policy and legislation development that will meet the needs of the Region. The staff provides technical assistance and support on legislation and responds to requests for information from legislators, legislative staff, and other agency partners. Staff also engages in statewide policy development through workgroups and direct partner interactions.

### *Policy Education*

Policy educates legislators and legislative staff about the value of the SNC, the Region, and the work that SNC and its Regional partners do to help advance state goals. Staff works closely with Communications to develop messaging, strategies, and materials for policy makers and partners.

### *Building and Maintaining Relationships*

Policy builds and maintains relationships with legislators, legislative staff, and partners who are key to influencing state policy, including SNC Legislative Liaisons. Staff participates in policy and legislation workgroups, hosts face-to-face meetings, and keeps in regular contact with policy makers in order to stay informed on current and potential future legislation, policies, and programs.

## **Communications**

### *State Decision Maker Education*

Communications creates and distributes compelling science-based content that shows why the Sierra Nevada is important to California and why the SNC is vital to supporting the Region. Communications creates videos, infographics, factsheets, and reports that highlight Regional challenges and the essential role the SNC plays in implementing solutions with statewide benefits. Content is distributed digitally through SNC's social media channels, website, and email-distribution lists, and through in-person meetings, presentations, and conferences.

### *News Outlet Relationship Management*

Communications is SNC's primary point of contact with the media. It responds to reporter inquiries and proactively works to publicize SNC's work by writing and distributing press releases and media advisories about newsworthy events. Communications creates strong, stable working relationships with reporters by consistently providing timely, relevant, and engaging information.

### *Amplification of Regional Voices*

Communications supports Regional Agency and NGO partner outreach efforts by providing content development and technical assistance where needed and helping to bolster beneficial messaging. Staff also connects partners to relevant reporters and media outlets and shares selected content from Regional partners via SNC's distribution channels.



### *Outreach to SNC Target Audiences*

Communications frequently publishes original content aimed at increasing interaction on social media and increasing followers and engagement on SNC’s social media platforms.

## **Science & GIS (Geographic Information Systems)**

### *Science & GIS Analysis*

Science & GIS tracks, reviews, and analyzes the latest scientific and Regional data for relevant trends as well as the potential impacts to or integration with SNC programs, partners, and the Region. Analyses are shared with SNC staff and the Board, policy partners, and state partners when appropriate.

### *Initiative and Policy Development*

Science & GIS utilizes Regional science and data expertise to inform state and Regional initiatives, policy, and legislation development that supports the needs of the Region. Science & GIS provides technical assistance and support to state, federal, and collaborative partners while also responding to requests for information from legislators, legislative staff, and state and federal agencies.

### *Science and Data Outreach and Communication*

Science & GIS engages in public forums and on technical advisory panels as subject experts to elevate the scientific and technical needs, trends, and importance of the Region in statewide and Regional efforts. Staff works closely with Communications to explore innovative ways to communicate science and data and develop messaging, strategies, and outreach materials for policy makers and partners.

### *Building and Maintaining Relationships*

Science & GIS builds and maintains relationships with Regional and national scientists and subject-matter experts in order to stay on top of the latest research, data, and land management guidance. Science & GIS utilize these relationships to broaden the SNC’s understanding of statewide and global trends and how those trends may impact the Region, SNC’s partners, and SNC’s programs.

### *Technical Assistance and Support*

Science & GIS provides project mapping support, data analysis, and technical assistance to both internal and external programs and initiatives.

## **Partnerships & Community Support**

### ***Funding and Capacity Trends Analysis***

Partnerships & Community Support tracks and analyzes funding and capacity trends in the Region with a concentration on needs and opportunities around forest health and community protection. Partnerships & Community Support also provides assessments on specific funding and capacity areas, when needed, to inform the development of SNC programs or projects, and coordinates and/or participates in Regional workgroups that help advance SNC's Strategic Goals.

### ***Funding, Capacity-Building, and Technical-Assistance Resources***

Staff identifies funding, and capacity-building and technical-assistance resources available for the Region through research and disseminates information about these opportunities through regular, ongoing communications to partners and stakeholders. Partnerships & Community Support also works with SNC staff and partners to identify funding for specific projects and provides free trainings to partners such as grant-writing workshops.

### ***Capacity-Building in the Region***

Partnerships & Community Support develops, supports, and implements Region-wide capacity-building programs, including specific capacity-related SNC-funded grant programs, as well as block-grant programs awarded to the SNC by other agencies or organizations.

### ***SNC Tribal Engagement Coordination***

Partnerships & Community Support provides guidance and coordination on SNC tribal engagement to help optimize integration of tribal engagement in SNC programs and policies, including legal requirements, such as AB 52, as per direction from the Governor's Tribal Liaison.

### ***Regional Partnerships and Collaboration Support***

Partnerships & Community Support assists Regional partnerships and collaboratives, including the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI), with funding strategies, grant application development, facilitation, advisement, and other related roles to help increase funding for project work and build organizational capacity. Partnerships & Community Support also hosts grant-writing workshops throughout the Region to support organizations engaged in forest and watershed health and sustainable recreation projects in both in-person and virtual formats.

## Actions—Policy & Outreach

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions of Policy & Outreach, the staff plans to focus on actions in the following areas:

### Policy

1. Track and engage on relevant new state policy efforts that emerge during the 2021/22 fiscal year, such as the state’s climate adaptation strategy update, biodiversity initiative, 2030 Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Strategy, and Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan implementation.
2. Host field tours and briefings for legislators, their staff, and other policy makers to help improve the understanding of Sierra Nevada issues, opportunities, and the vital work of the SNC, conditional on protocols during and post-COVID-19.
3. Track, analyze, and inform policy and funding decisions, including bond development through the end of the 2021/22 legislative session.
4. Build relationships with SNC Legislative Liaisons and organize field tours or other educational events that serve their interests and improve understanding of Sierra Nevada needs and opportunities.

### Communications

1. Develop and implement a communications campaign/strategy focused on the benefits and outcomes of the investments made in the Sierra Nevada Region through the Wildfire and Forest Resilience budget.

### Science & GIS

1. Explore innovative planning and contracting tools and partnerships for SNC that can help the Region meet its pace and scale goals, such as the Good Neighbor Authority and Master Stewardship agreements. Pilot concepts through TCSI Pace & Scale work group.

### Partnerships & Community Support

1. Administer currently active capacity-building grants throughout the Region via the WIP Capacity Program. This includes grants funded by the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) and the Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund. The RFFCP provides block grants to regional entities throughout the state (of which SNC is one) to serve as funding administrators for capacity-building and forest management project planning activities. Staff will continue to implement the active RFFCP-funded subgrants, including subgrants that are part of the AB 2551 spatial planning and analysis efforts in the upper watersheds.

2. Prepare for and execute potential new subgrants that may be funded by the next round of the RFFCP, which was included as part of the wildfire resilience budget package.
3. Following the review and redesign of SNC's Tribal engagement program, staff will begin to implement actions to broaden and more fully integrate tribal engagement across the organization.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Administrative Services carries out a broad array of administrative functions that support the effective and efficient implementation and achievement of SNC’s mission and goals, as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

### Core Functions—Administrative Services

#### **Administrative Team**

##### *Financial Operations*

Provide budgeting and accounting services that are vital to the implementation of the grants program and overall operational activities of the SNC. Financial Operations interacts with the CNRA bond program and various control agencies, including the Department of Finance and State Controller’s Office, to provide essential resources and ensure fiduciary accountability and transparency in all aspects of SNC’s activities.

##### *Human Resources*

SNC’s employees are the agency’s most valuable assets. Human Resources keeps staff healthy, happy, and productive. Human resource professionals provide and implement guiding policies, ensure staff is paid on time, develop and deliver effective training and cross-training opportunities, and implement health and safety programs.

##### *Information Technology*

Critical to all SNC programs are the hardware, software, and networks that make up its core technology services. Working with CNRA and the California Department of Technology, staff members develop, monitor, and implement programs that support communications and core operational activities.

##### *Legal Services and Government Accountability*

Legal provides critical analyses and guidance in the development of legal positions/actions and in the implementation of laws, rules, and regulations, and provides guidance on program and policy development to the SNC Board, Executive Leadership, and staff. Staff also assists in the more-complicated aspects of contract law compliance, analyses of administrative issues, and legal compliance of developed policies and procedures.



## ***Business Services***

Business Services keeps the heat and lights on, ensures contractors are paid, and vehicles are in good working condition and available for daily staff activities. Staff makes sure critical contracts and provisions of necessary supplies are provided to carry out the mission of the SNC; that they are handled in compliance with Department of General Services' laws, rules, and guidelines; and that all related policies are applied appropriately.

## ***Office Management & Board Support***

Office Management & Board Support is the key communication link between the Board and SNC staff. Staff provides direct administrative support to Boardmembers, oversees board meeting planning and implementation, manages executive calendars and schedules, and develops department-wide internal operational policies and procedures.

## **Actions—Administrative Services**

In addition to continuing ongoing core functions, Administrative Services plans to focus on actions in the following areas:

### **Cross-cutting across Administrative Services**

1. Continue the completion of desk manuals for SNC administrative operations. In 2020-21, the analysis of nine functional administrative areas was completed, and desk manuals were prepared for high-priority areas. Work will continue to complete remaining desk manuals.
2. Staff will execute a Digital Workplace Project to upgrade operational processes. Working from multiple remote locations underscored the need to review the approaches to e-file storage and cleanup, as well as consider tools we provide to the Board and staff as we move into the future. The Digital Workplace Project is already well underway and has been fully scoped, including areas of shared drives cleanup, document retention, SharePoint/Teams upgrades, meeting management, and ongoing technology needs assessment. Many workflow and process upgrades are expected to be completed by the end of FY 2021-22, with all other key areas continuing progress in 2021-22. The Digital Workplace Project is consistent with CNRA's five pillars of workplace transformation to prioritize flexibility and choice, to develop better ways of working, to innovate and take risks, to create purposeful and inclusive workplaces, and to change the future of government.

### **Human Resources**

1. Continue to develop cross-training plans for key personnel who may retire in the next 12-24 months.

2. Develop staff-training strategy/plan, including assessment of staff strengths and weaknesses to determine focus of training and how to ensure staff receive appropriate/needed training.

## **Information Technology**

1. Continue to fine-tune processes and acquire tools to conduct public meetings, or access to public meetings, virtually, without delays or modifications to SNC priorities. As SNC prepares to transition back to in-person board meetings, staff will explore how to extend virtual participation and board member engagement into the future.

## **Legal Services & Government Accountability**

1. Update SNC policy related to the Conflict-of-Interest Code.

## **Business Services**

1. Focus on “new normal” operations: returning to work, keeping safe, developing new policies around ongoing workplace practices; further developing workspace-sharing concepts; adjusting space to reflect changes; Auburn-office front lobby changes.

## **Office Management & Board Support**

1. Develop specific operational policies and templates relevant to front desk workload and procedures.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
June 3, 2021

## Key Meetings and Presentations

### March 2021 – May 2021

**March 8, 2021 – Watershed Improvement Project (WIP) Summit: Building the Restoration Economy in the Sierra Nevada:** The Summit featured the topic of a restoration economy in the Sierra Nevada Region and how that could reduce wildfire risk, support forest health, bring back livable-wage jobs, promote entrepreneurship, and help achieve the state's climate goals. This virtual summit presented a vision of how a restoration economy could be established in the Region and the resources necessary to make it a success.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2020 Annual Report released:** On March 4, 2021, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy released its 2020 Annual Report, documenting challenges and successes experienced during the 2020 calendar year. The report is [now available online](#).

**Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) released Framework for Resilience:** The TCSI Framework for Resilience, a new tool that will help land managers and their partners assess landscape conditions, set objectives, design projects, and measure progress towards social-ecological resilience was released in the of middle of March. The Framework for Resilience was developed for the 2.4 million-acre TCSI landscape but restoration teams could easily apply the same framework to fire-adapted landscapes across California and beyond.

**March 28, 2021: California Foundation for the Energy and Environment (CFEE) Best of California Field Tour:** Sierra Nevada Conservancy Policy and Outreach Branch Manager Brittany Covich presented to CFEE during a wildfire resilience field tour stop on the Best of California Tour. The presentation covered the 2013 Rim Fire, trends in wildfires and forest health in the Sierra Nevada, and regional approaches to addressing Sierra Nevada wildfire risks in a changing climate. CFEE connects labor, business, local government and environmental leaders with elected officials and policymakers to facilitate solutions-oriented and nonpartisan dialogue on California's fundamental challenges.

**April 28 – May 26 each Wednesday – Stewardship 2021 Spring Forum:** Executive Officer Angela Avery will attend many of these forums. This engaging, multi-week, virtual event will provide opportunities to learn, exchange, and engage with presenters and with each other. It will offer a unique experience to connect with peers, be a part of a dynamic discussion about topics SNC is passionate about, and will shape the future of landscape-scale stewardship while enriching SNC's work.

**\$38 million in requests received for SNC's early action Wildfire Resilience Grant**

**Program:** SNC has received 32 applications and approximately \$38 million in requests for funding for forest health and wildfire risk reduction projects across the Sierra Nevada Region. Applications are being evaluated now and will be recommended for approval by the SNC Board on July 15, 2021. \$19 million is currently available for local assistance grants in SNC's program.

**May 25-26, 2021 – Southern Cascade/Sierra Nevada Regional Roundtable on**

**nature-based climate strategies:** Executive Officer Angela Avery will speak during the opening plenary of this virtual regional roundtable discussion designed to gather information on how nature-based strategies can be accelerated in the region. This event is part of a series of regional discussions hosted by TNC, the USFA Climate Hub, and local partners that will result in a statewide synthesis of regional ideas. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy, along with the UC Berkeley College of Natural Resources, are cohosting the discussion with TNC and the USDA Climate Hub.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
June 3, 2021

March 2021  
through  
May 2021

Letters of Support





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March 10, 2021

Mr. Tim Woodall  
PARC Board President  
Protect American River Canyons

**RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR REMOVAL OF METAL AND CONCRETE DEBRIS  
FROM THE AMERICAN RIVER**

Dear Mr. Woodall:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the effort by Protect American River Canyons (PARC) to remove the steel and concrete wreckage of the former State Route (SR) 49 Bridge that washed out in a 1964 flood and remains in the North Fork of the American River within the Auburn State Recreation Area (Auburn SRA) just below the city of Auburn.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) funded the 2014 North Fork/Middle Fork American River Metal Debris Inventory and Cleanup Plan that guides this effort.

The Auburn SRA has become an enormously popular recreation destination which is visited by more than a million people annually. The bridge debris constitutes a public safety hazard in and along the river at one of the most popular areas in the Auburn SRA known as the American River Confluence, where large numbers of people hike, swim, raft, picnic, and enjoy the spectacular scenery.

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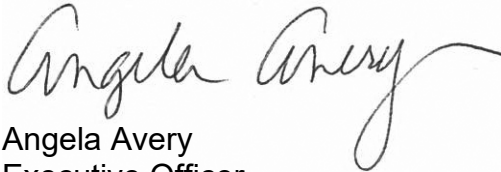
March 10, 2021

Page 2 of 2

Auburn SRA is a valuable public asset to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada and the greater Sacramento region, drawing people not only from around the region but from all over California and in fact from all over the world.

This effort aligns with the SNC mission to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

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March 22, 2021

Dear AIM Team:

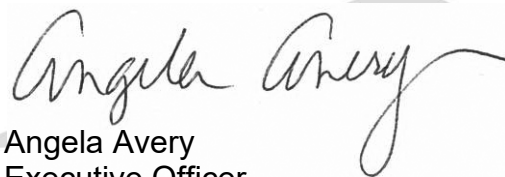
**RE: SIERRA CORPS FORESTRY FELLOWSHIP ACTION, IMPLEMENTATION & MITIGATION (AIM) GRANT**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), a California State Agency, is pleased to support the Sierra Nevada Alliance's proposal to expand the Sierra Corps Forestry Fellowship Program by adding two fellowship positions. The SNC provided the seed funding to start the Sierra Corps Program in 2019 and it fully supports proposals to expand and continue the program into the future.

The SNC believes that expanding this program continues to fill a regional gap of available professionals to plan and implement forest restoration projects in the Sierra. With the recent increase in catastrophic wildfire in California and across the U.S., increasing the trained forestry professional workforce is extremely important. Forestry fellows placed in the program through this grant proposal will not only gain professional mentorship, but also contribute to increasing their host site's capacity to complete on-the-ground forest restoration and wildfire resilience work. This in turn will help foster more much-needed management to increase pace and scale of forest restoration and monitoring. The SNC looks forward to supporting the work of the Alliance's Sierra Corps Forestry Fellowship Program to conduct more implementation, education, and outreach through the fellows, while building innovative solutions to the wildfire crisis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

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April 30, 2021

Mr. Thom Porter  
Fire Chief/Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Dear Chief Porter:

**RE: 20-FH-MMU-002  
SOUTHERN SIERRA ALL LANDS RESTORATION AND RECOVERY PROJECT –  
MARIPOSA COUNTY,  
PHASE II**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is pleased to support the Mariposa County Resource Conservation District's (MCRCD) application for the Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Project (Project), Phase II. This Project is part of the larger Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Program (SSARRP) and is a collaborative effort that includes multiple public and private landowners and land managers and research institutions.

The Southern Sierra Nevada has been greatly impacted by the effects of climate change. This region has endured multi-year extreme drought conditions, a massive tree mortality event, an increase in the number and severity of wildland fires, and destructive flooding and erosion attributable to changing weather patterns and a changing landscape. These challenges far exceed the resources available to address them.

The SNC views collaborative partnerships, such as the SSARRP, as key to addressing landscape-level solutions. The SNC has partnered with the MCRCD on many projects and has participated and supported the SSARRP since its inception. The approach taken for this project, strategically removing hazardous fuel loading across public and private lands, will improve the wildfire resilience of the region. The Project will protect multiple communities and watershed resources within Mariposa County. Protecting Yosemite National Park and the Sierra National Forest will not only preserve natural resource capital but will protect the local economy of all the Gateway Communities that depend heavily on tourism to the region.

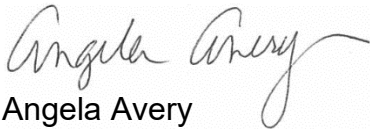
Chief Thom Porter

April 30, 2021

Page 2 of 2

The multi-county SSARRP partnership in the Southern Sierra is an example of the solution-based collaborative atmosphere that the SNC promotes throughout the region. The benefits of this Project are numerous, while the consequences of inaction in this region are high. The SNC recommends the Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Project, Phase II for funding from CAL FIRE's California Climate Investments Forest Health Program.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

cc: Melinda Barrett







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May 5, 2021

Chief Helge Eng  
Deputy Director, Resource Management  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
PO Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Dear Chief Eng:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would like to recommend the proposal, *"Improving predictions of fire impacts after mega drought: Lessons for carbon storage, defending the WUI, and improving resilience and recovery following the 2020 Creek Fire (20-RP-FKU-064),"* led by Dr. Van R. Kane, Dr. Thomas Painter, and Dr. Marc Meyer, for funding.

The SNC has a mission to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada and its communities, and recent megafires have proved a real threat to these goals. The SNC's flagship initiative, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), is a collaborative program to restore resilience to the forested landscapes and communities of the Sierra Nevada and SNC believes this research will offer important insights that will advance the goals of the WIP. The proposed research will allow SNC to better understand the drivers behind the megafires of 2020, the impacts of these fires on the health of Sierra Nevada forests and communities, and the role management can play in protecting valued assets and mitigating the intensity and impact of future wildfires.

Dr. Kane and his team are well positioned to answer these questions: they have extensive experience with Sierra Nevada forest and fire ecology, forest management, and in applying remote sensing to answer management questions. Dr. Kane and his team are in a unique position to offer new insights critical to planning for future climate change impacts because they possess an unprecedented combination of pre- and post-fire high resolution light detection and ranging (LiDAR) data for the Creek Fire footprint. These data will allow for an in-depth analysis of the factors that drove burn severity patterns, the consequences for restoration and carbon storage, and the implications for future forest and fuels management.

The SNC has previously worked with Dr. Kane on an SNC-led grant, DRAM Settlement Project, grant number DRAMUW001, that studied forest conditions across the Tahoe National

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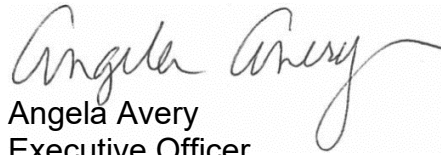


Chief Helge Eng  
May 5, 2021  
Page 2 of 2

Forest using LiDAR data. His team did an excellent job on the analysis for that grant and delivered a well-attended virtual workshop.

Dr. Kane and his team have collaborated with a diverse group of scientists, managers, and subject-matter experts, including SNC's Regional Scientist and Southern Sierra Area Representative, to develop priority questions that could be answered using Creek Fire data. These questions provide the foundation for this project and the lessons learned from this analysis will have implications for management not just within the Creek Fire footprint, but across the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC therefore recommends this project for CAL FIRE funding.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer





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May 5, 2021

Helge Eng  
Deputy Director - Resources Management,  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244

Dear Deputy Director Eng:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy received Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) funding from the California Natural Resources Agency to support forest health by increasing regional capacity in the Sierra Nevada – Cascade – Inyo region to prioritize, develop, and implement landscape-level forest health and wildfire resiliency.

A portion of this RFFCP funding was awarded to the Shasta County Fire Safe Council to assist them in developing much needed forest health and wildfire resiliency projects in Shasta County. The Whitmore Forest and Watershed Restoration Project is one of the projects that has been prioritized and developed with the assistance of RFFCP funding. The project has been designed to remove suppressed understory vegetation that is creating dangerous wildfire conditions and poor forest health conditions. These mechanical and hand treatments would protect the community of Whitmore and improve the health and resiliency of the forest to withstand catastrophic wildfire and climate change.

The RFFCP funding has helped lead to the development of this priority project, but now additional funding is needed for implementation. Please support the implementation of this important priority project in the region.

Sincerely,

Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

Enclosures: project map

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May 13, 2021

CAL FIRE  
Grants Management, Fire Prevention Grants  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Dear Review Committee:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) supports a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection application on behalf of the Feather River Resource Conservation District (RCD).

Feather River RCD's application to organize, educate, facilitate, and equip a Plumas Underburn Cooperative will partner with community landowners to accomplish forest clearing and ground burning activities that improve the resiliency of the landscapes that people live in, reducing the risk of catastrophic loss to high severity wildfire. The SNC recognizes and supports the partnerships needed to help create a proactive population who will work to make their properties firesafe, and supports the work being done by agencies and local partners to increase the pace and scale of watershed restoration in the Sierra Nevada Region.

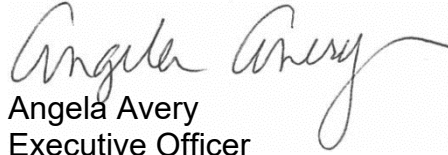
Through SNC's support of the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) and through its Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), SNC has funded multiple projects that use prescribed fire treatments to enhance forest and watershed health in some of the state's most highly valued watersheds. In 2020, SNC and the RFFCP program partnered with the Feather River RCD to create a Capacity Building Work Plan focused on partnership development and outreach/education in their rural region. It also includes development of a subregional plan intended to develop a pipeline of projects. As a result of the Feather River RCD's SNC/RFFCP planning, prescribed fire has been identified as an important part of creating fire adapted landscapes. Increasing the capacity of the Plumas Underburn Cooperative is a critical step towards implementing prescribed fire treatments in priority areas identified in the subregional plan.

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The SNC appreciates CAL FIRE's consideration of projects, such as the Plumas Cooperative Underburn project, that support collaborative planning and implementation of wildfire resiliency and forest health protection, management, and restoration efforts at the watershed level.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer







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May 13, 2021

Stewart McMorrow  
Forest Legacy Program Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Dear Mr. McMorrow:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would like to recommend Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) for funding for their project, *"Decision Support for Multi-Agency Forest Management Planning the Southern Sierra Nevada."*

The SNC is a California state agency with a mission to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada and its communities. The SNC's flagship initiative, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore resilience to the forested landscapes and communities of the Sierra Nevada. The SNC works with on-the-ground partners and stakeholders to identify and implement projects to restore the health and function of Sierra Nevada forests. Decision support tools and spatial models are critical to identifying, and helping stakeholders agree upon, the most effective management and restoration strategies for Sierra Nevada landscapes.

In the past several years, interacting abiotic and biotic stressors have disproportionately impacted the southern Sierra Nevada in the form of unprecedented tree mortality and wildfires of extreme scope, scale, and intensity. These events have highlighted the need for strategic and effective forest management and restoration interventions to mitigate risk to communities while protecting valuable natural assets and preserving key ecosystem functions.

Sophisticated, scientifically valid models and decision support tools, such as those proposed by CBI, provide novel ways of "seeing" and understanding a landscape. These tools play a key role in helping stakeholders and managers establish a common understanding of landscape risk, evaluate trade-offs, and work across jurisdictional boundaries.

Stewart McMorrow

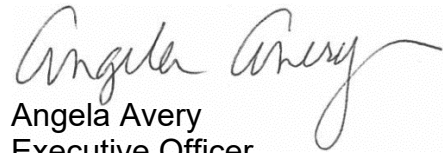
May 13, 2021

Page 2 of 2

The CBI has extensive expertise in the science of forest resilience, conservation planning, stakeholder coordination, and modeling and decision-support systems. They have an established history of working closely with Sierra Nevada land managers and scientists; and their collaborations with other scientists like J. Werne, J. Coen. M. North, and A. Syphard to improve fire modeling methods (under a separate proposal) are of particular importance for resilience planning in the Sierra Nevada.

The CBI has been working with southern Sierra agency leadership, local nonprofits, and the SNC's Southern Sierra Area Representative to establish a strong partnership with local agencies and stakeholders and to identify goals and objectives that transcend jurisdictional boundaries, around which to frame their decision support tool. The SNC staff will continue to help coordinate local land managers, researchers, partners, stakeholders, and tribes who will be engaged in the development of this tool and eventual deployment of its outputs.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer





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May 17, 2021

Stewart McMorrow  
Forest Legacy Program Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Dear Mr. McMorrow:

**RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR SIERRA FOOTHILL CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT  
FOREST LEGACY GRANT APPLICATION, *WANDERN RANCH PHASES II & III*  
CONSERVATION EASEMENT ACQUISITION PROJECT**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is pleased to provide this letter in support of Sierra Foothill Conservancy's (SFC) application to CAL FIRE's California Climate Investments Forest Legacy Grant Program for the Wandern Ranch Phases II & III Conservation Easement Acquisition Project. Permanent conservation of the Wandern Ranch's Phases II and III will result in the protection of environmentally important mixed hardwood forest land threatened by land use conversion, fragmentation, and development. A conservation easement held by SFC on the Wandern Ranch Phases II and III will ensure continued proactive management of the Chowchilla River Watershed, capacity to address large-scale wildfire prevention, ability to allow recreational access and open space, and opportunity to provide essential pieces of land for wildlife connectivity and biodiversity. This multi-faceted project is critical for climate change adaptation, carbon sequestration, and GHG emission reduction benefits.

The Wandern Ranch Phases II and III properties total just over 1,270 acres and collectively include 4.2 miles of the Chowchilla River, featuring 8.16 additional miles of healthy riparian corridors, thriving blue oak woodland, and dramatic topography that boasts a unique low elevation mixed hardwood conifer forest. Epitomizing an effective, sustainable Sierra Nevada foothill working landscape, the ranch represents a symbiotic relationship between cattle grazing, and vegetation and natural resource management, resulting in a thriving rangeland ecosystem. Its proximity between protected public lands, such as Eastman Lake and the Sierra National Forest, provides essential linkages between wildlife corridors – both aquatic and terrestrial. These diverse habitats provide potential for up to 17 special-status plants and 21 special-status wildlife species,

Mr. Stewart McMorrow

May 17, 2021

Page 2 of 2

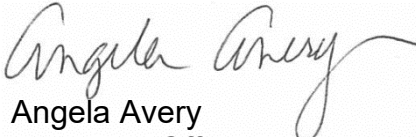
including Mariposa pussypaws, hardhead, California tiger salamander, American badger, western spadefoot toad, and western pond turtle.

A conservation easement on Phases II and III would mark an integral step in expanding SFC's Madera Mariposa Focus Area (MMFA), a strategic protection effort to connect 30,000+ acres of public and private land along the Madera-Mariposa County line. The SNC has supported this specific focus area with its own grant program and has worked alongside SFC on many projects in the Southern Sierra. Expanding the MMFA also aligns with SNC's Strategic Plan of conserving working landscapes and providing increased opportunities for tourism and recreation through SFC's docent-led hiking program.

By furthering the goals of the California Forest Carbon Plan, California's Natural and Working Lands Implementation Plan, and AB 32 Climate Change Scoping Plan, the project will continue, and even work to enhance, effective land management practices conducive to climate resilience and protect the Chowchilla River's biodiversity and upper watershed (an important water supply for residential and agricultural purposes downstream in the larger San Joaquin River Watershed and Central Valley).

Therefore, the SNC recommends the Wandern Ranch Phases II and III Conservation Easement and Acquisition Project for funding through CAL FIRE's California Climate Investments Forest Legacy Program. The SNC appreciates the opportunity to recommend this special project for consideration.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

cc: Bridget Fithian, Sierra Foothill Conservancy





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May 18, 2021

Brad Graevs, District Manager  
Feather River Resource Conservation District  
422 N Mill Creek Rd.  
Quincy CA, 95971

Dear Mr. Graevs:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy fully supports the Feather River Resource Conservation District's proposal to CAL FIRE's California Climate Investments Forest Health Grant Program for the Indian Valley Forest Health Project. The Indian Valley Forest Health Project is the result of project prioritization, collaborative partnerships, and joint capacity building and will complete approximately 4,880 acres of forest management treatments in mountainous landscapes at the headwaters of the North Fork Feather River. Plans for work in this challenging and vulnerable landscape of mixed ownership have been developing since 2017.

The proposed project is the result of collaborative planning accomplished with support from the Regional Forests and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). The project represents areas identified as regional priorities in the RFFCP planning process using criteria that examined current conditions, proximity to communities and critical infrastructure, as well as being implementation ready.

The Feather River Resource Conservation District has demonstrated the ability to successfully manage state funds and projects on both Federal and private lands within the State Responsibility Area in Plumas County. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has partnered successfully with the Feather River Resource Conservation District on similar efforts and fully supports this project.

Sincerely,

Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

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May 18, 2021

Thom Porter  
Fire Chief/Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Dear Chief Porter:

**RE: 20-FH-MMU-063  
SOUTHERN SIERRA ALL LANDS RESTORATION AND RECOVERY FUELS  
REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is pleased to support the Mariposa County Resource Conservation District's (MCRCD) application for the Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Fuels Reduction Partnership Project (Project). This Project is part of the larger Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Program (SSARRP) which is a collaborative effort ranging multiple public and private landowners and managers and research institutions.

The Southern Sierra Nevada has been greatly impacted by the effects of climate change. This region has endured multi-year extreme drought conditions, a massive tree mortality event, an increase in the number and severity of wildland fires, and destructive flooding and erosion attributable to changing weather patterns and a changing landscape. These challenges far exceed the resources available to address them.

The SNC views collaborative partnerships, such as the SSARRP, as key in addressing landscape-level solutions. The SNC has partnered with the MCRCD on many projects and has participated and supported the SSARRP since its inception. The approach taken for this project, strategically removing hazardous fuel loading across public and private lands, will improve the wildfire resiliency of the region. The Project will clearly protect multiple communities and watershed resources within Mariposa County. Protecting Yosemite National Park and the Sierra National Forest will not only preserve natural resource capital but will protect the local economy of all the Gateway Communities that depend heavily on tourism to the region.

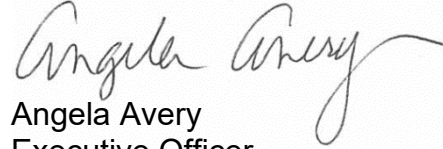
Chief Thom Porter

May 18, 2021

Page 2 of 2

The multi-county SSARRP partnership in the Southern Sierra is an example of the solution-based collaborative atmosphere that the SNC promotes throughout the region. The benefits of this Project are numerous while the consequences of inaction in this region are high. The SNC recommends the Southern Sierra All Lands Restoration and Recovery Fuels Reduction Partnership Project for funding from CAL FIRE's California Climate Investments Forest Health Program.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

cc: Melinda Barrett, MCRCD

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May 19, 2021

Mr. Stewart McMorrow  
Forest Legacy Program Director  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
P.O. Box 944246  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

**RE: CRYSTAL BASIN FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT**

Dear Mr. McMorrow:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) supports Great Basin Institute's (GBI) application for funding to reduce wildfire risk within the Crystal Basin Area now under consideration by the California Climate Investment Program. This project falls within the South Fork American River Cohesive Strategy, a watershed-scale collaborative in which the SNC participates.

The SNC is a partner in the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative and works extensively with the Eldorado National Forest to assist their stewardship efforts. The health of forests and watersheds across the Eldorado National Forest is of critical importance to the SNC. These forests provide biodiverse habitat, clean and abundant water, carbon storage, and important recreation opportunities.

Forests in the project area and throughout much of the South Fork of the American River watershed are overstocked with small trees and brush and are at risk of large, damaging wildfires. The SNC supports an ecologically-sound and science-based restoration approach to reducing the risk of catastrophic fire.

The SNC supports collaborative approaches to implementation, funding, and financing that will be pursued to complete this work. The Great Basin Institute submitted an application to SNC's Immediate Action Grant Program in the amount of \$1,255,225 to further this mission-critical work for the next three years. The SNC is in the process of considering the application and understands that the request submitted to CAL FIRE would fund efforts in adjacent stands to complete landscape-level treatments.

Sincerely,

Angela Avery  
Executive Officer

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