



BOARD MEETING

SNC BOARD MEETING
JUNE 4 & 5, 2025
CEDARVILLE, MODOC COUNTY

Photo: Cedarville, looking west



Board Meeting Agenda

June 4 & 5, 2025 – Northeast Subregion – Cedarville, CA

Board Tour

June 4, 2025
1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

*Modoc District Fairgrounds
1 Center Street
Cedarville, CA 96104*

Members of the Board and staff will participate in a field trip to explore issues and activities related to creative partnerships and collaboration employed to further forest resilience, recreation, and tribal capacity building in the Northeast Subregion. Members of the public are invited to participate in the field tour but are responsible for their own transportation and lunch. The tour will start at the Modoc District Fairgrounds in Cedarville.

Board Meeting

June 5, 2025
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (End time is approximate)

*Modoc District Fairgrounds
Dance Hall
1 Center Street
Cedarville, CA 96104*

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**
3. **Roll Call**
4. **[Approval of March 6, 2025, 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](#)

7. **[SNC Governing Board Communication on Federal Participation \(ACTION\)](#)**

The Board may take action to request staff to develop a letter to federal leadership that communicates the value and importance of federal participation on SNC's Governing Board.

8. **[Proposition 68 Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program Grant Award Recommendation \(ACTION\)](#)**

The Board may make determinations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and award a grant to the following project:

- a. [#1803-LC](#)

Tahoe Forest Gateway – Zrelak Acquisition in the amount of \$545,000 to 40 Acre Conservation League with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

9. **[Proposition 68 Grant Program Approval \(ACTION\)](#)**

The Board may take action to authorize the allocation of remaining Proposition 68 local assistance funds (no less than \$4.1 million) and approve updates to the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Guidelines and Guideline Companion Document for the next grant cycle.

- [Attachment A](#): Draft Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Guidelines updates

- [Attachment B](#): Draft Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Guideline Companion Document for the 2025-2027 grant cycle

10. [Proposition 4 Grant Program Approval \(ACTION\)](#)

The Board may take action to authorize and allocate Proposition 4 local assistance funds (up to \$10 million) and approve updates to the Wildfire and Forest Resilience 2025 Immediate Action Directed Grant Program Guidelines for the next grant cycle.

- [Attachment A](#): Draft Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines

11. [State Water Project Headwaters Investment Pilot \(ACTION\)](#)

The Board will consider and may act on a delegation of authority for the executive officer to administer a grant in support of a State Water Project headwaters investment pilot.

12. [Action Plan Update \(INFORMATIONAL\)](#)

Staff will report on work completed under the 2024-2025 Action Plan.

13. Boardmember Comments

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

14. 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.

15. Adjournment

Additional Board Materials

- [Executive Officer Authorized Grant Agreement Amendments and Grant Awards](#)
- [Key Meetings and Presentations](#)
- [Letters of Support](#)
- Sierra Spotlight

Additional Information

Meeting materials are available on the [SNC website](http://sierranevada.ca.gov) (sierranevada.ca.gov). For additional information, contact SNC Board Services at (530) 401-5378, sncboard@sierranevada.ca.gov, or 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn CA 95603.

For reasonable accommodation, including documents in alternative formats, please contact SNC at least **five (5)** working days in advance.

To submit public comment related to this meeting, email public-comments@sierranevada.ca.gov by 5:00 p.m., Friday, May 30, 2025. Remote participation is not available at this time.

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 6, 2025 – South Central Subregion – Murphys, CA

Board Meeting

Ironstone Vineyards
Alhambra Music Room
1894 Six Mile Rd.
Murphys, CA 95247

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.

2. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Board Chair Nathan Voegeli administered the Oath of Office for incoming Boardmembers Martin Huberty, Jennifer Kreitz, Ric Leutwyler, Shane Starr, and Doug Teeter.

3. Roll Call

Present:

- Nathan Voegeli
- Stephen Benson
- John Brissenden
- Barnie Gyant
- Martin Huberty
- Robert Johnston
- Jennifer Kreitz
- Ric Leutwyler
- Lisa Lien-Mager
- Victoria Rome
- Shane Starr
- Doug Teeter
- Dennis Townsend

Absent:

- Chris Feutrier
- Gabe Garcia
- Clayton Jordan

4. Approval of December 13, 2024 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Action

Boardmember Dennis Townsend moved and Boardmember Ric Leutwyler seconded the motion to approve the December 13, 2024, Meeting Minutes.

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

5. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Voegeli thanked Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff and presenters for the prior day's tour. Voegeli also acknowledged the absence of SNC's non-voting federally appointed Boardmembers.

Boardmember Johnston arrived during this item.

6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided the Board with updates, including welcoming the five newly appointed Boardmembers, the importance of diversity on SNC's Governing Board, how critical federal partners are, internal staffing updates, the passage of the Climate Bond (Proposition 4) and the remaining funding from Proposition 68, SNC's priorities throughout the next fiscal year, the Executive Order issued by Governor Newsom requiring government workers return to the office four days a week, potential uncertainty related to changes within the federal government and potential impacts to SNC's Region and Governing Board, and SNC grants on federal lands.

The SNC attorney, Mary Akens, provided information on recently issued federal regulatory actions and federal and state executive orders that may impact the SNC.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on the ways uncertainty at the federal level may impact SNC's Region, the feasibility of offering remote participation

for SNC's Board meetings, and whether the Governing Board should submit a letter on the effects of recent federal government changes and the effects on SNC's Region.

b. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich spoke to the Board on the current state legislative session, common themes of the 2025/26 legislative session, Nature-Based Solutions goals, SNC's recent communications projects, relationships between SNC and Department of Water Resources, and upcoming events and information-sharing opportunities.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on public education opportunities, a need for graphics that display fire history in watersheds, and how to frame the discussion around wildfire treatment and fire-prevention projects.

7. Annual Budget Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Deputy Executive Officer Amy Lussier provided an update on the state budget process, funds used by SNC, the Governor's Executive Order requiring staff to return to the office four days a week, grant funding appropriations updates, staffing, and funding goals.

Board & Technical Services Manager Amy Nelson provided information on SNC's operating budget, different types of funding, how the budget team works with other units to manage SNC's budget, past budget expenditures, and current and future budget projections.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included potential issues with federal reimbursements and how the Department of Finance is monitoring closely for any impacts to the state.

Boardmember Brissenden left during this item.

8. Regional Readiness for Landscape Investment (INFORMATIONAL)

Regional Scientist Sarah Campe provided the Board with information on the evolution of SNC's strategy for developing and funding landscape-scale work, the current status of the Regional Readiness for Landscape Investment, and coordination efforts between the SNC, CNRA, and the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included ways to increase the amount of investment-ready projects in local areas and the timeline for rolling out funding for these projects.

9. Grant 937A-LGPP Crystal Basin – Healthy Eldorado Landscape Partnership Pilot Project – Recreation Activities Amendment (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky provided the Board with information on the proposed amendment to the Crystal Basin – Healthy Eldorado Landscape Partnership Pilot Project.

The proposed amendment allows \$1,591,541 of SNC funds to shift from project planning to project implementation that occurs within the existing recreation infrastructure and amenities around Wrights Lake.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included the timeline of the project, funding for the project, and the shift from planning to implementation.

Action

Boardmember Martin Huberty moved and Boardmember Townsend seconded the motion to authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Crystal Basin – Healthy Eldorado Landscape Partnership Pilot Project – Recreation Activities (937A-LGPP) amendment, approve the revised project per the Exhibit A, and authorize staff to amend the grant agreement with the GBI.

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

10. California Forest Residual Aggregation for Market Enhancement (CAL FRAME) Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Kerri Timmer of Placer County, Christiana Darlington of CLERE Inc, and Regine Miller of Headwaters Environmental provided an update on the CAL FRAME pilot program, which included information on the Placer County Air Pollution Control District study on the Mosquito Fire; ways to solve the challenges sustainable biomass markets face; CAL FRAME's role in solving these challenges; North East California, Tahoe Central Sierra, and South Central Sierra case studies and common findings from these studies; and future funding opportunities.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included sustainable business practices for biomass-based products, increasing biomass utilization, biomass transportation options, and potential marketing plans for wood-utilization products.

Public Comment

Renee Orth, Tuolumne County resident, expressed concerns that there may be a strong incentive to prevent the kind of burning that is necessary for the health of forests once business models are centered around biomass utilization.

Tuolumne County Supervisor Jaron Brandon expressed appreciation for this presentation and provided many utilization ideas for biomass.

11. Proposition 68 Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Program Grant Award Recommendation (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Fristensky provided the Board with information to make determinations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and award a grant to the following project:

a. #1800

Tahoe Forest Gateway – Forest Health, Phase Two project in Placer County in the amount of \$ 2,299,993 to 40 Acre Conservation League with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Discussion among Boardmembers, SNC staff, and 40 Acre Conservation League staff focused on the costs and plans for maintenance of the land, how generated revenue will be used, which entities had been consulted for this project, and partners 40 Acre Conservation League will work with on the project.

Public Comment

Jade Stevens, president of 40 Acre Conservation League, thanked the Board for its support, discussion, and consideration regarding this project. Stevens emphasized that this project will serve as a gateway to the wilderness area of the Tahoe National Forest for many Californians.

Action

Boardmember Doug Teeter moved and Boardmember Townsend seconded the motion to authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Tahoe Forest

Gateway – Forest Health, Phase Two (#1800) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$2,299,993 to 40 Acre Conservation League, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

12. Boardmember Comments

Boardmember Teeter expressed excitement for returning to the Board.

Boardmember Huberty thanked attendees for coming to Murphys for the meeting.

Board Chair Voegeli thanked those who attended the meeting and expressed happiness to see all the questions and engagement. Board Chair Voegeli also congratulated longtime SNC employee Tristyn Armstrong on her retirement. Armstrong served SNC for over 16 years and directly supported the Governing Board for many of those years.

13. Public Comments

Christopher Buttner, Murphys resident, spoke on concerns regarding the electric vehicle charging station and Tesla Supercharger located in Meadowmont Center in Arnold, CA.

Renee Orth, Tuolumne County resident, voiced her concerns regarding the Golden State Natural Resources wood pellet project and the impact the project has on the environment.

Joel Metzger, general manager of Utica Water and Power Authority, noted the interest he has seen within the water industry to work with organizations like SNC to prevent wildfires and increase forest resilience.

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.

Additional Board Materials

- Executive Officer Authorized Grant Agreement Amendments and Grant Awards
- Key Meetings and Presentations
- Letters of Support
- Sierra Spotlight

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Agenda Item 6b: Administrative Update

Budget

The May Revision for the 2025-26 budget was released; a verbal update will be provided to the Board on any significant updates to SNC's budget from what was reported at the March meeting.

The SNC was included in AB 100, a Budget Bill Jr that amends the 2023 and 2024 Budget Acts. Specifically, the language in the bill appropriates \$30.9 million of Climate Bond (Prop 4) funding to SNC in 2024-25; this is funding that SNC had already been allocated, with planned appropriation request(s) in future years. This bill passed and was signed by Governor Newsom, so the appropriation in 2024-25 removes the ability for SNC to request this funding in future years, but still retains its other Climate Bond allocations for future appropriation requests.

Human Resources

The California State Payroll System (CSPS) is a \$1.2 billion payroll and business expense management modernization project recently approved by the legislature. The project was awarded in March 2025 to CGI Technologies Inc. The project is currently in the six-month planning and designing phase, with an estimated two years of development. The SNC will be working with change experts to document processes and evaluate current systems for integration.

The SNC's annual Workforce Analysis was submitted to CalHR/Gov Ops; this is a required report on SNC's demographics. The SNC met its goals set forth in the prior year's Workforce Analysis.

Since the March meeting, SNC filled two positions recently left vacant. Danielle Pearson joined the HR Unit as an administrative analyst, working on training, internal policy, and other human resource tasks. Danielle has robust state experience, particularly in the HR field. Iris Foxfoot joined the Policy & Outreach Division as SNC's GIS analyst. Iris has a bachelor's degree in global studies and a master's degree in environmental science and management and has previously worked on analyzing the overlap of social vulnerability and high-wildfire risk.

Business Services

The SNC reports greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to the nonprofit Climate Registry each March for the prior calendar year. The 2024 reporting year showed a decrease in emissions from 2023 due to lower natural gas use, less fuel consumption, and the release of space in

the Mariposa office. The SNC anticipates an increase in GHG emissions for 2025 and 2026 reporting years due to the increase in in-person work.

Tenant improvements at SNC's headquarters office in Auburn are now complete and include secure parking for fleet vehicles, updated access control systems, and the incorporation of restrooms into the suite. The project also included updating multiple workstations to be height-adjustable, continuing SNC's support for the health and wellness of staff.

Information Technology

The SNC IT team is currently preparing for its first Information Security Program Audit, an audit that is required for all state agencies. It will take significant staff time, and any gaps found will need remediation over the following months. Although this is a labor- and time-intensive project, it will ensure SNC aligns with state policies and requirements. The audit will be conducted mid-July at no cost to SNC as expenses are covered by the California Department of Technology.

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.

Agenda Item 6c: Policy & Outreach Update

Background

The Policy & Outreach Division supports Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) role as a bridge between the Region and the state. Staff members focus on educating key decision-makers about the value of the Sierra-Cascade Region and communicating about the Region's policy and funding needs. In addition, the Policy & Outreach Division also works alongside the Field Operations & Grants Division to educate partners about state policy and program trends to support alignment between in-Region projects and state goals. 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. The Policy & Outreach Division also provides strategic direction to special projects and programs that advance science and technology in the Region and build the capacity of partner organizations.

Current Status

State Legislative Update

The legislative session is in full swing, with both policy and fiscal committee hearings well underway. The SNC staff has been tracking and analyzing numerous bills, including the following administrative bills that could directly impact SNC's operations:

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 766** by Assemblymember Sharp Collins (D- San Diego) would require every agency and department subject to the governor's authority to develop or update their strategic plan to reflect the use of data analysis to advance racial equity and to change the organization's mission, goals, and other policies to address disparities. It would require the plans to be publicly available and to include input from historically disadvantaged communities that are within the scope of the agency's programs or policies. Additionally, it would require the appointed diversity, equity, and inclusion officer within each department to conduct a racial equity analysis prior to implementing any budget or regulation.
- **Assembly Bill (AB) 880** by Assemblymember Bennett (D- Ventura) would require state agencies that administer grant programs to reimburse grantees for their indirect cost at one of four specified rates as requested by grantees in their respective applications. It would also expand the Prompt Payment Act (PPA) to include grants to nonprofits, as defined, and would make all grants or contracts paid for by a state agency to a nonprofit organization subject to the PPA, rather than

only those under \$500,000. Additionally, it revises the conditions under which a state agency can dispute a discrepancy of a claim by requiring the discrepancy amount to be greater than \$250 or 5 percent of the invoice amount, whichever is less.

The SNC staff is also tracking several California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)-related bills that could directly impact SNC:

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 404** by Assemblymember Sanchez (R- Rancho Santa Margarita) would extend the exemption from specified CEQA requirements for prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel-reduction projects, or related activities, undertaken, in whole or in part, on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) indefinitely. This exemption, passed by SB 901 (Dodd, Chapter 662, Statutes of 2018), would otherwise sunset January 1, 2028.
- **Assembly Bill (AB) 442** by Assemblymember Hadwick (R- Alturas) would provide a statutory exemption from CEQA for prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel-reduction projects in communities that have only one ingress/egress route.
- **Assembly Bill (AB) 1227** by Assemblymember Ellis (R- Bakersfield) would provide a statutory exemption from CEQA for all wildfire-prevention projects. Wildfire prevention projects are defined as those including but not limited to installation and maintenance of fuel breaks, fuels reduction, roadside fuels reduction, forest thinning, prescribed fire, reforestation, timber harvesting, fuel treatments in the wildland-urban interface, dead fuel removal, and other projects that reasonably could be considered fuels reduction or vegetation management.

The SNC staff is also tracking a number of other bills that would create regulatory exemptions for various fuel-reduction activities or otherwise streamline CEQA and permitting processes, codify nature-based solutions climate targets, establish home hardening certification programs, require carbon emissions accounting for wildfire and pile burning biomass, and propose changes to the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) and Cap-and-Trade program.

Additionally, the staff is keeping track of legislation that has been proposed in response to the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires, with an eye for policy that could be applied to communities in the Sierra-Cascade Region to support wildfire recovery and rebuilding.

Some specific bills of note include two that would provide financial protection and benefits to homeowners and two that would aid and expedite recovery and rebuilding efforts.

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 238** by Assemblymember Harabedian (D- Pasadena) would require a mortgage servicer to provide mortgage forbearance to borrowers experiencing financial hardship as a direct result of the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires for up to an initial 90 days, which can be extended in 90-day increments at the request of the borrower for up to one year.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 663** by Senator Allen (D- Santa Monica) would make several changes to property tax law to benefit victims of the January 2025 Los Angeles and Ventura County wildfires. It would extend the deadline from one to two years for taxpayers to file a claim for disaster reassessment of a property that was destroyed by the fires. It would lengthen the deadline from five to eight years for a qualified home to be reconstructed and eligible for transfer of its pre-disaster value for property tax rate purposes. Finally, it directs the assessor to deem a property that received welfare exemption in 2025 to remain exempt if it is no longer being used for its exempt purpose due to damage by the fires.
- **Assembly Bill (AB) 239** by Assemblymember Harabedian (D- Pasadena) would require the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to jointly convene a state-led County of Los Angeles disaster housing task force to coordinate and streamline efforts between state and federal emergency response entities and local governments to rebuild housing in communities impacted by the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires.
- **Assembly Bill (AB) 685** by Assemblymember Solache (D- Lakewood) would establish the Los Angeles and Ventura Wildfire Small Business Recovery Act and would appropriate \$50 million from the General Fund to provide assistance to small businesses directly impacted by the January 2025 wildfires in Los Angeles and Ventura counties.

Bills must pass out of their house of origin by June 6. The last day for bills to pass out of policy committees is July 18, which is also the first day of the summer legislative recess. Bills that fail to meet these deadlines could become two-year bills and may be acted on in January 2026. The legislature will reconvene on August 18 and all bills must be passed by September 12 for the governor to act on by October 12.

Legislative Outreach Update

The SNC staff has been continuing to reach out to new and returning legislative members and their staff to build relationships, provide updates on SNC's recent work, and to build or discuss connections between legislative priorities and the issues impacting the Sierra-Cascade Region. Since the March Board meeting, staff has met with members or staff for all four of our legislative liaisons: Senator Jerry McNerney (D- Stockton), Senator Megan Dahle (R- Bieber), Assemblymember Buffy Wicks (D- Oakland), and Assemblymember Heather Hadwick (R- Alturas). Staff also met with Senator John Laird (D- Santa Cruz), legislative aide for Assemblymember Connolly (D- San Rafael), fellow from

Assemblymember Wick's office, senior consultant for the Joint Committee on Climate Change Policies, and consultants from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO).

Communications Update

The Sierra Spotlight

Several Sierra Spotlight articles were published since the March Board document cycle ended and the focus covered nearly all of SNC's and California's top priorities in the Sierra-Cascade, including improving forest health, protecting communities, increasing recreation opportunities and outdoor access, and conserving more open spaces. An article on how a [prescribed fire project cuts risks, increases climate resilience in South Yuba Canyon near Nevada City](#) showed legislators and the public the importance and benefits "good" fire can provide to the landscape and aid in community protection. The Tahoe Forest Gateway, a recently purchased parcel of land along Interstate 80 by the 40 Acre Conservation League, the only Black-led conservancy in California, was highlighted in a Spotlight post titled [the SNC awards 2.3 million to the 40 Acre Conservation League for a forest-health project](#).

Continuing on the success of the first two rounds of funding invested, the SNC staff published a Spotlight article about how [the RFFCP builds strong wildfire-resilience foundation in the Sierra-Cascade Region](#). The post highlighted the grantees and investments from round three of SNC's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). An article on Nature at work: building climate resilience in the Sierra-Cascade was also published, highlighting SNC-funded projects that deploy a suite of land-management activities that channel natural processes to remove and store carbon, prevent future emissions, and increase biodiversity and climate resilience.

The SNC Media Mentions

Regional media outlets and policy-focused digital news outlets amplified many of the Sierra Spotlight stories and reported on the impacts of SNC grant funding. In the far north, the television station KRCR (ABC 7) published on its website how vital funding from agencies, such as the SNC, has been [in Shasta County Fire Safe Council seeks new funding after grant ends](#). YubaNet, an online Sierra news outlet, reposted [Prescribed fire project cuts risks, increases climate resilience in South Yuba Canyon near Nevada City](#), while also providing an update on [Visible Progress on the Little Deer Creek Resilience Project](#). The Mountain Democrat updated community members on El Dorado County Resource Conservation District's wildfire-resilience strategy, a project funded by the SNC, in its article [Placerville considers collaborative fire resilience strategy](#). The Plumas Sun updated readers on a fuels-reduction project near Quincy, formerly called the Quincy Watershed Improvement Project, which the SNC funded both the planning for and implementation of its [Collaboration is key in Boyles Ravine burn project](#).

Finally, SNC's Division Chief of Field Operations and Grants, Andy Fristensky, was interviewed about the forest-health grant to the 40 Acre Conservation League by Nevada County's News Talk Radio 830 in its [SNC Awards Grant for Fire Fuels Reduction](#) posting.

Social Media Report

Over the past three months, SNC has maintained an active presence across all major social media platforms, including X, Instagram, Facebook, Threads, and LinkedIn. While all platforms have shown growth, Instagram remains SNC's fastest-growing channel, with our follower count now surpassing 3,000.

In addition, the SNC has expanded its outreach by deciding to join Bluesky, a new alternative to X, to further grow our presence on new and emerging platforms.

In March, the SNC successfully streamed its Board meeting on YouTube, providing live access through both our website and the YouTube platform.

The SNC also collaborated with the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) in promoting its Women's History Month events, including promotion of the [month's Secretary Speaker Series event](#), which SNC's Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Brittany Covich, participated in. There was a social media focus on Earth Day in April, and the SNC remained as active as possible in highlighting other relevant events, CNRA's social media initiatives and, of course, the promotion of the incredible work it and its partners continue to do throughout the Region.

Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Update

As previously reported, the SNC Governing Board approved receipt of three RFFCP block grants for a total of \$24.17 million from the Department of Conservation (DOC). The overarching goal of the RFFCP is to increase the ability of partners to develop, prioritize, and implement wildfire- and forest-resilience projects and support the development of Regional priority strategies aimed at restoring health and resilience to communities, forests, and other wildfire-prone landscapes. The SNC is distributing this funding directly to partners through subgrants and providing Region-wide technical assistance.

Closeout and Outcomes of RFFCP Rounds 1 and 2

The SNC provided a total of 30 subgrants to partners through two initial rounds of RFFCP funding. Those subgrants, and the SNC's first two block grants from the DOC, were completed and closed out at the end of March.

The two initial rounds of RFFCP subgrants represent an investment of approximately \$9 million in the SNC's Regional partners, building the capacity of forest collaborations, Resource Conservation Districts, Fire Safe Councils, and other entities. This investment

has been very fruitful. In less than four years, these subgrantees have leveraged their funding into over \$231 million in additional state, federal, and private dollars for projects. These subgrantees used the funds to create new jobs, establish and expand partnerships or collaboratives, and complete CEQA/NEPA permitting for new projects. Hundreds of staff of forest and fire organizations have attended free RFFCP-sponsored workshops and built organizational expertise on subjects, such as CEQA/NEPA, Geographic Information Systems, prevailing wages, negotiated indirect cost rates, reforestation, practical statistics, governing board development, and tribal engagement. Organizations also received individual expert assistance from professional consulting firms to help them improve accounting systems, engage in strategic planning, develop new legal documents to use in contracting and partnerships, and create procurement and employment policies.

RFFCP Round 3 Subgrant Status

With the RFFCP Round 3 funding, the SNC has awarded 26 subgrants for capacity building and pipeline-project development. These subgrants have been executed and have completed their first quarter of activities, which include organizational development, strategic planning, project identification and prioritization, collaboration and partnership development, GIS mapping and development of decision-support tools, tribal outreach, project design, creation of monitoring plans, grant writing, and other critical capacity areas. Subgrants are expected to close in the second quarter of 2027.

Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program Update

In the spring of 2024, the SNC launched the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program, which has been designed in response to needs tribes have directly expressed. The Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program includes group trainings and workshops, peer learning, one-on-one support, and technical assistance. The goals of the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program are to build capacity of tribes to obtain, administer, and implement grants; connect tribes to local natural-resource planning and program implementation; build peer support and mentorship relationships among tribes; provide opportunities to put skills into practice to meet specific needs; and support tribes in the leadership and development of their own priority projects.

Twelve tribes and tribal organizations were selected to participate and have entered into subgrant agreements, and the cohort participants have shown strong engagement in and commitment to the program from the very beginning. Kickoff activities were held in December 2024, and training activities initiated in early 2025. Initial training is focused on developing grant-management systems and expertise, including in the areas of invoicing and reporting. Participants are also working on project development in preparation for submitting funding applications for their priority forest and fire projects. The specific needs of each participant's tribe or organization for capacity-building technical assistance are being assessed. Through a subgrant with the Sierra Nevada Alliance, technical assistance

providers are being identified and will be made available for individual and group assistance to meet these needs.

The Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program activities are anticipated to continue through the end of 2027.

Science Update

A recent study published by researchers examined the [effectiveness of various fuel reduction treatments](#) in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade forests, specifically focusing on different approaches to achieving desired outcomes for wildfire resilience. The study, [conducted in part on Blodgett Forest](#), explored using combinations of mechanical treatments and prescribed fire to reduce fuels and mitigate potential wildfire behavior. The key findings show that there are different pathways to achieving resilience, but multiple entries and treatments designed to treat fuels at all layers are necessary to create resilience conditions.

The researchers found that both mechanical treatments (such as thinning) and prescribed fire were effective in increasing resilience to fire. However, the study highlighted that for mixed conifer forests in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade—many of which have not experienced fire in decades—multiple entries are necessary to achieve desired effects. Treatments also need to address all fuel layers in the forest, including ground fuels, ladder fuels, and tree canopy (or crown continuity), in order to create resilient forest conditions.

- **Mechanical Treatments:** Mechanical thinning is effective in reducing tree density, ladder fuels, and crown continuity, but it leaves a significant amount of fuel on the forest floor. This accumulation can lead to high flame lengths in the event of a wildfire. To address this, follow-up prescribed fire can be used as an effective secondary treatment to reduce ground fuels and enhance forest resilience. Without this second treatment, forests remain vulnerable to high-severity wildfires until the remaining ground fuels naturally decay, a process that may take seven to 10 years. The benefit of mechanical treatment, however, is that the profit from merchantable timber can offset the costs of other fuel-reduction activities.
- **Fire-Only Treatments:** The study also examined fire-only treatments for reducing tree density and fuel loads. Fire crews intentionally burned at an intensity hot enough to kill trees and consume ground fuels. Although the first-entry burn was effective in reducing potential fire behavior immediately, this approach leaves behind large amounts of dead biomass. Follow-up treatments are needed to remove standing dead biomass and achieve desired conditions. It takes about seven years for the forest to accumulate sufficient ground fuels to carry a subsequent fire that can reduce the remaining dead biomass.

It is important to contextualize these findings in light of broader forest-management challenges. Only about one-third of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade forested landscape is [suitable for mechanical](#) treatments, which means that fire-based treatments will be necessary for the majority of these forests. Furthermore, California has set an ambitious goal to [conduct beneficial fire treatments on 1.5 million acres](#) of land annually by 2045. This underscores the need for adequate funding and a long-term approach to forest treatments. Specifically, state funding for forest restoration, particularly prescribed fire, should account for the time needed to allow for multiple treatment cycles—typically seven to 10 years—to achieve resilient conditions.

An additional or alternative approach to increasing the pace of treatments to enhance resilience involves utilizing areas affected by recent wildfires. Although the amount of high-severity wildfire in recent years has been unprecedented, the majority of wildfire impacts in fire footprints remains low and moderate severity. Research suggests that [low and moderate severity wildfire could be viewed as restorative disturbance](#). In many cases, this type of wildfire is equivalent to a first-entry treatment – which is often the most expensive part of a project – and treating these footprints with a second-entry prescribed fire or other form of biomass removal could be a cost-effective pathway to achieving resilience for large parts of the Sierra-Cascade.

Managers will need to utilize a variety of tools and pathways to build wide-scale resilience in Sierra Nevada and Cascade forests, including mechanical treatments, prescribed fire, and the strategic use of wildfire-affected areas. The SNC's [Landscape Investment Strategy](#) is intended to create long-term, flexible funding to allow for the time and resources needed for these comprehensive restoration efforts.

Next Steps

Over the summer, SNC staff will be working with partners to host field tours and educational events to help introduce decisionmakers to SNC's work to address Regional and state goals. The staff will be supporting ongoing work to quantify and communicate about SNC's projects that advance the state's Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets and will continue to advance the DOC's RFFCP goals through the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program and the most recent round of capacity investments in the Region. The staff will also be highlighting SNC's partners and their projects on the Sierra Spotlight and social media channels.

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 5, 2025

Agenda Item 7: SNC Governing Board Communication on Federal Participation

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board (Board) provides strategic direction and guidance to advance the SNC's mission of improving the environmental, economic, and social well-being of California's Sierra-Cascade Region. The Region covers approximately 27 million acres, 67 percent of which is managed by federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service. Because federally managed lands make up such a significant portion of SNC's service area, the SNC Governing Board includes three liaison advisors who serve in an advisory, nonvoting capacity as follows:

1. One representative of the National Park Service, designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior.
2. One representative of the United States Forest Service, designated by the United States Secretary of Agriculture.
3. One representative of the United States Bureau of Land Management, designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior.

The SNC values the participation of its liaison advisors and appreciates long-term support of its federal partners in supporting SNC's mission.

At SNC's March 6, 2025, Board meeting, no appointed federal liaison advisors were in attendance due to federal constraints. During the meeting, there was a discussion among Boardmembers and staff on ways uncertainty at the federal level may impact SNC's Region, the feasibility of offering remote participation for SNC's Board meetings, and whether the Board should submit a letter on the effects of recent federal government changes and potential effects those changes might have on SNC's Region. Staff members of the SNC were directed to look into the ability of the Board to write a letter to federal leadership.

The staff has been working closely with its newly appointed federal liaison advisors and confirming their ability to join the June meeting in person. Staff members have also looked into the possibility of holding meetings remotely within the constraints of the Bagley-Keene Act, to ensure that SNC's federal liaison advisors can continue to participate in SNC Board meetings.

Current Status

In response to the above and for the SNC Governing Board's consideration, is a proposal for a letter executed by the Chair of the SNC Governing Board Nathan Voegeli to be sent to the United States Secretary of Interior and Secretary of Agriculture, and copied to Chief of the United States Forest Service, National Park Service Director, and Director of the Bureau of Land Management, expressing SNC Board's appreciation of its federal partners, its appointed liaison advisors, and the federal government's long-term support of the SNC. The letter will highlight federal support of SNC, providing grants and loans to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations in order to carry out the purposes of the SNC, including but not limited to reducing the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires.

The letter would also convey the Board's appreciation for the federal government's continued support of providing the necessary opportunities for its federally appointed liaison advisors to continue in-person participation in SNC's governing Board meetings.

Next Steps

Upon Board approval, SNC staff will draft a letter for SNC Board Chair Nathan Voegeli to review, execute, and submit to the federal representatives listed above.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board authorize the preparation of a letter expressing the SNC Board's appreciation of the federal government's long-term support for SNC's purposes, to be executed by SNC Board Chair Nathan Voegeli, consistent with the above stated language.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Agenda Item 8: Proposition 68 Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program Grant Award Recommendation

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):

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

These allocations are used for local assistance grants, as well as program support and California's administration of the bond.

The Budget Act of 2018 appropriated the full \$20,625,000 of local assistance available for the WIP. The SNC administered a Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program cycle, and the SNC Governing Board awarded the full appropriation in 35 grants throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The Budget Act of 2018 and the Budget Act of 2020 together appropriated \$15,675,000 for local assistance towards SNC purposes. The SNC administered multiple rounds of the Forest and Watershed Health, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, Strategic Land Conservation, and Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Grant programs. Between 2019 and 2022, the SNC Governing Board awarded the full amount available in 37 grants throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region.

In September 2024, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 157 (Gabriel), amending the Budget Act of 2024. This amendment allocates \$5 million of Proposition 68 funds to the SNC to be granted to the 40 Acre Conservation League (40ACL) for purposes consistent with Proposition 68 and SNC grant guidelines.

Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program

In December 2018, the SNC Governing Board authorized grant guidelines for the Proposition 68 Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program. The focus of this

program is on land conservation through fee title or easement-acquisition projects to protect lands threatened by conversion or lands providing critical resilience to climate change. Acquisitions should aim to protect, restore, or create:

- Unique cultural and/or natural areas
- Working landscapes that provide public resources or economic benefit
- Access to public lands and recreation opportunities

Designed as a directed grant program, SNC staff work closely with local partners to identify and develop projects.

40 Acre Conservation League

The 40ACL is the first and only Black-led land conservancy in California, with a dual mission of conserving and restoring natural lands and developing inclusive and welcoming public access for recreational and educational opportunities in nature. In June 2023, the SNC provided \$750,000, in conjunction with \$2,250,000 from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), for the 40ACL to purchase 650 acres to create the Tahoe Forest Gateway (SNC Project #1619-LC). The 40ACL now owns this property in fee title.

Current Status

Following the direction of the allocation in the amended Budget Act of 2024, SNC staff worked closely with the 40ACL to develop projects that would further SNC's Regional goals and comply with the requirements of Proposition 68 and AB 157.

In March 2025, the SNC Governing Board awarded the 40ACL a \$2,299,993 Forest and Watershed Health grant to implement forest-restoration treatments on the Gateway property (SNC Project #1800). The WCB is also supporting forest-restoration treatments, as well as 40ACL's planning and design activities for public access amenities on the Gateway property.

In March 2025, the 40ACL submitted a concept project proposal and full project proposal to acquire another adjacent parcel, the Zrelak property, to further develop the goals of the Tahoe Forest Gateway. The project below was developed under the Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program and is now recommended for Board approval.

a. Project #1803-LC

Tahoe Forest Gateway – Zrelak Acquisition

40 Acre Conservation League

\$545,000

Placer County

The Tahoe Forest Gateway – Zrelak Acquisition (Project) is a 26-acre fee title acquisition located in the community of Blue Canyon just west of Emigrant Gap, along Highway 80 in Placer County. This Project is adjacent to the 40ACL's existing 650-acre Tahoe Forest Gateway (Gateway) that was purchased in early 2024. The Gateway is adjacent to Tahoe National Forest land and PG&E land held under easement by Placer Land Trust. There is a small community of about 60 homes immediately adjacent to the property. This Project will be an extension of the Gateway and in the future may potentially be developed into a public recreation trailhead with entryway into Tahoe National Forest. However, no management plan has yet to be developed, approved, or funded at this point.

The Project will acquire two adjacent parcels from a single willing seller. In addition to preserving the property and potentially providing access from the Gateway to public lands to the south, the Project will also preserve historic structures on the site, including the Blue Canyon Bar/house, a two-person stone jailhouse, and a cookhouse. These structures will be preserved and restored with the vision of potentially providing education and limited services, such as water and restrooms, for the public. The nine miles of trail under consideration for the Gateway could potentially extend across the Project to a “last stop” destination prior to entering Tahoe National Forest. This Project will meet numerous SNC goals. Acquisition will protect headwater streams that feed into the North Fork American River. Potential future fuels reduction on the property, in conjunction with efforts underway at the Gateway, will improve protection of communities around Blue Canyon and Nyack, as well as protecting important public infrastructure. Once the Gateway is opened to the public, it will support SNC's strategic goal of improving equitable access for all.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance: The proposed Project's activities are categorically exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources.

[Access the Project Details and the Notice of Exemption \(Project #1803-LC\)](#)

Next Steps

Upon authorization by the Board, staff will file the CEQA Notice of Exemption, enter into grant agreement for the Project with the 40ACL, and the 40ACL and partners will proceed with project implementation under the grant agreement.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Tahoe Forest Gateway – Zrelak Acquisition (#1803-LC) project,

Agenda Item 8: Proposition 68 Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program Grant
Award Recommendation

Page 4

**authorize a grant award in the amount of \$545,000 to the 40 Acre Conservation League,
and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 68 Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program SNC Project Number 1803-LC

SNC ID Number: 1803-LC

Applicant: 40 Acre Conservation League

Project Title: Tahoe Forest Gateway-Zrelak Acquisition

SNC Subregion: Central

County(ies): Placer

Funding Amount Requested: \$545,000

Funding Amount Recommended: \$545,000

Total Project Cost: \$545,000

Funding Authority: Proposition 68

Project Scope / Description

The Tahoe Forest Gateway-Zrelak Acquisition project (Project) is a 26-acre acquisition in the community of Blue Canyon just west of Emigrant Gap, along Highway 80 in Placer County. The Project, led by the 40 Acre Conservation League (League), is adjacent to the League's existing 650-acre Tahoe Forest Gateway (Gateway) that was purchased in early 2024. The Gateway is adjacent to Tahoe National Forest land and PG&E land held under easement by Placer Land Trust. There is a small community of about 60 homes immediately adjacent to the property. This Project will be an extension of the Gateway and in the future may potentially be developed into a public recreation trailhead and entryway into Tahoe National Forest.

The Project will acquire two adjacent parcels from a single willing seller. One parcel is 10 acres and the other is 16 acres. In addition to preserving the property and providing access from the Gateway to public lands to the south, the Project will also preserve historic structures on the site including the Blue Canyon Bar/house, a 2-person stone jailhouse, and cookhouse. These structures will be preserved and restored with the vision of potentially providing education and limited services, such as water and restrooms, for the public. The nine miles of trail under consideration for the Gateway could potentially extend across the Project to a "last stop" destination prior to entering Tahoe National Forest. However, no management plan has yet been developed, approved, or funded at this point.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) previously funded acquisition of the Gateway property. In addition, the SNC and WCB have funded land-management planning, fuels reduction, restoration, fencing, and road improvements that are currently underway at the Gateway. The California Conservation Corps provided in-kind support for fuels reduction at the Gateway. The SNC also granted \$2 million to the National Forest Foundation for the Tahoe National Forest's nearby Nyack forest-health project.

The League is the first and only Black-led land conservancy in California, with a dual mission of conserving and restoring natural lands and developing inclusive and welcoming public access for recreational and educational opportunities in nature. The SNC provided \$750,000, in conjunction with \$2,250,000 from the WCB to purchase the 650 acres to create the Gateway. The League owns the property in fee title and is partnering with the WCB on a first phase of forest restoration. A second phase of restoration is planned, supported by a \$2.3 million grant from SNC that was awarded in March of 2025.

This acquisition Project is entirely funded by the SNC and will result in additional property owned by the League in fee title. The League will complete the planned forest-health and fuels-reduction projects at the existing Gateway property supported by the SNC and WCB, while developing a plan for use of the new property acquired and its incorporation into the Gateway. The League continues to seek additional funding for site improvements and to develop and implement its full vision for the Gateway.

This Project will meet numerous SNC goals. Acquisition will protect headwater streams that feed into the North Fork American River. Potential future fuels reduction on the property, in conjunction with efforts underway at the Gateway, will improve protection of communities around Blue Canyon and Nyack, as well as protecting important public infrastructure. Once the Gateway is opened to the public, it will support SNC's strategic goal of improving equitable access for all.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Current Appraisal	Complete
Department of General Services Appraisal Review	August 2025
Current Title Report	Complete
Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment	Complete
Purchase and Sale Agreement	Complete
Completed Draft Deed and Notice of Unrecorded Funding Agreement	Complete
Long-Term Monitoring and Management Plan	September 2025
Close of Escrow	September 2025
Boundary and Topographical Survey	September 2025
SNC Progress Reports	Every 6 months
Final Report With Performance Measures	September 2025
Estimated Project Completion Date	September 2025

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Acquisition	\$ 531,000
Boundary and Topographical Survey	\$ 8,000
Escrow Fees	\$ 6,000
Administrative Costs	\$ 0
Total	\$ 545,000

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- None received

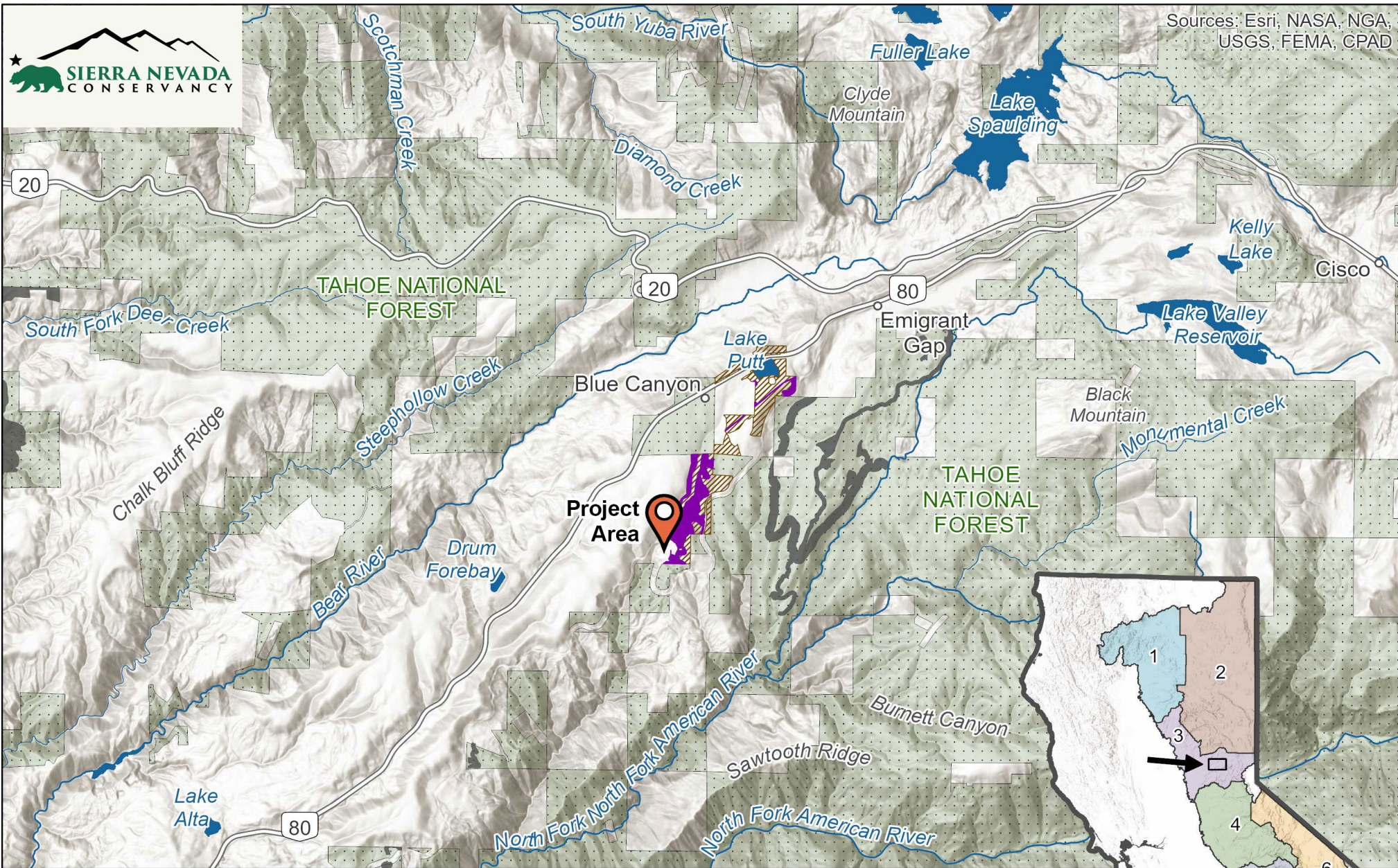
Opposition:

- None 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.

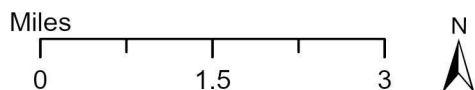
- Acres of Land Conserved



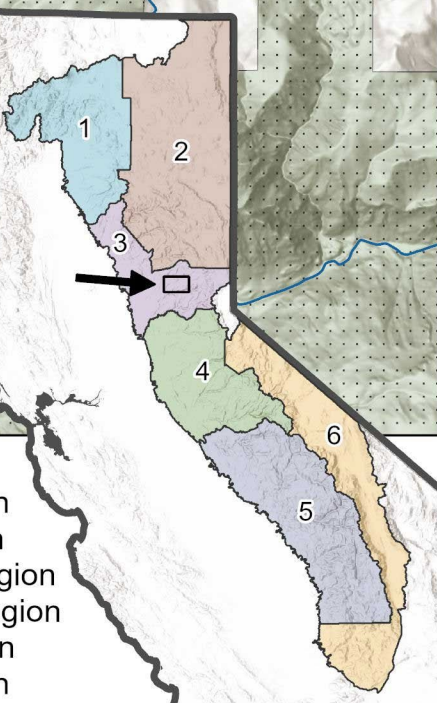
1803-LC: Tahoe Forest Gateway— Zrelak Acquisition

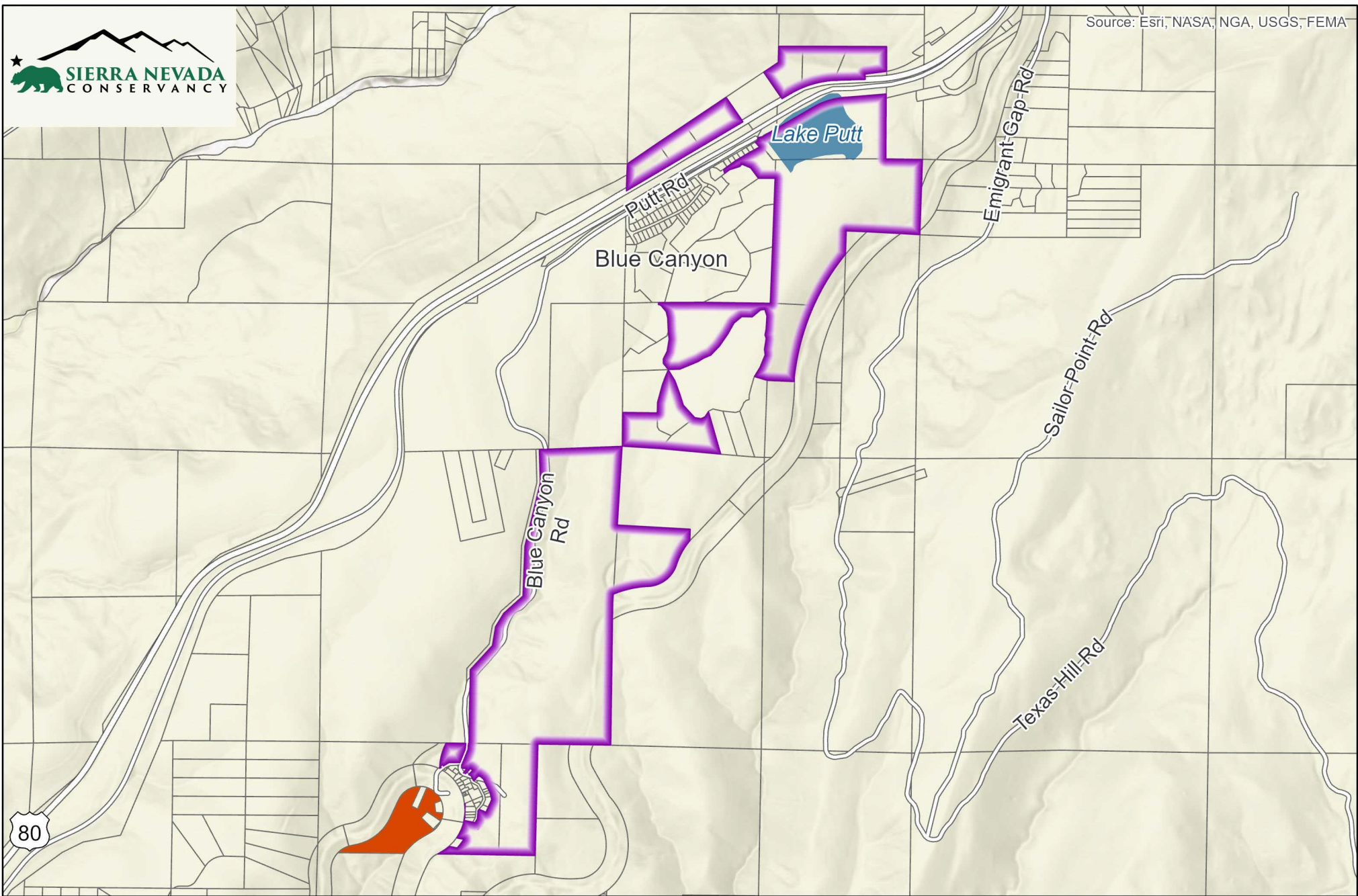
40 Acre Conservation League

- Tahoe Forest Gateway (SNC Funded)
- Tahoe Forest Gateway (WCB Funded)
- Other Projects
- US Forest Service

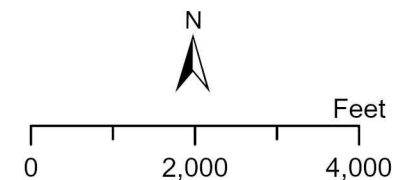
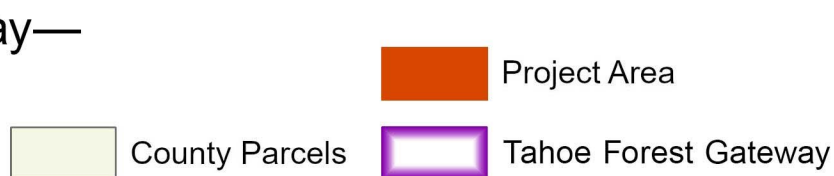


1. Northwest Subregion
2. Northeast Subregion
3. North Central Subregion
4. South Central Subregion
5. Southwest Subregion
6. Southeast Subregion



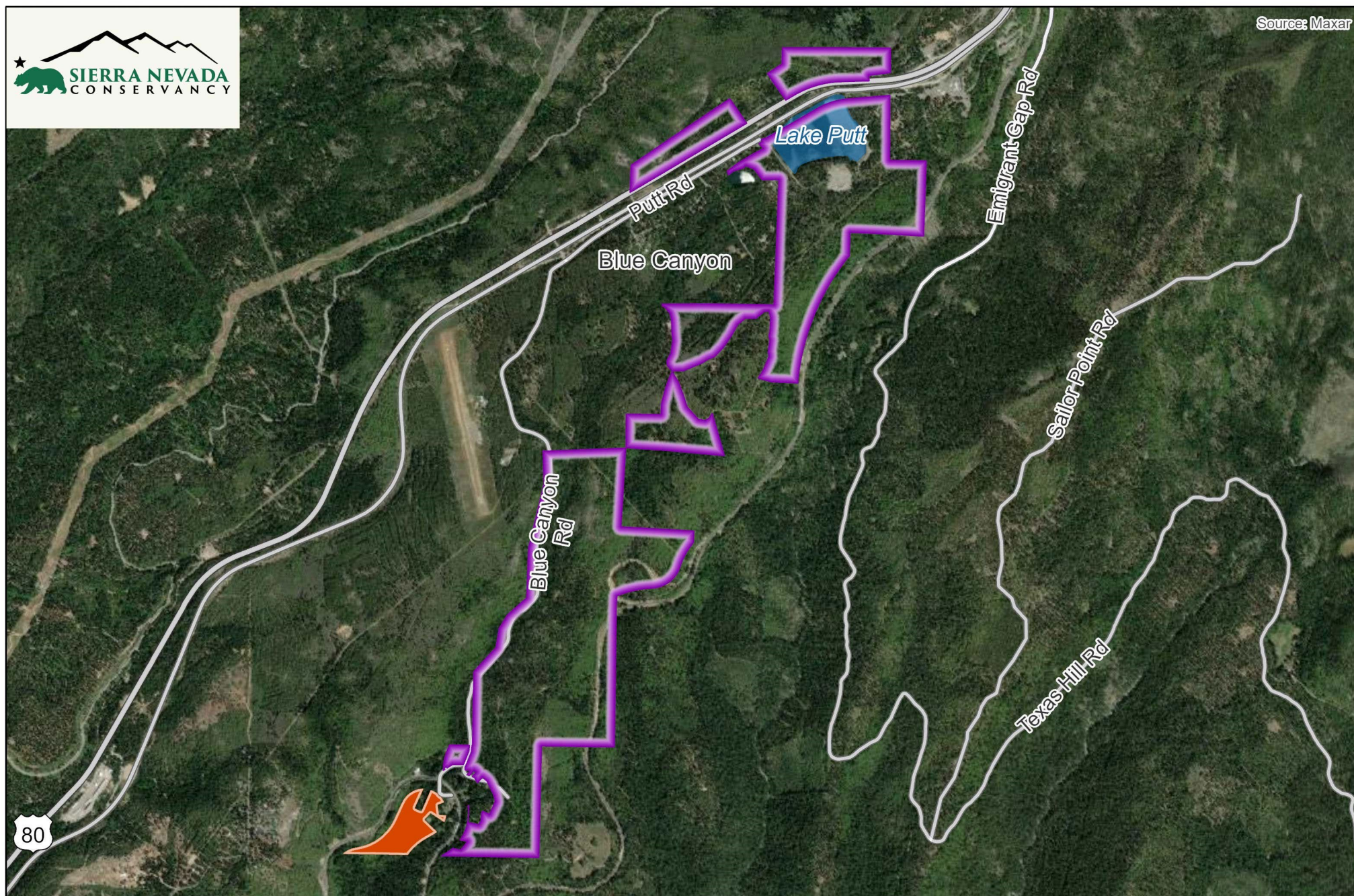


1803-LC: Tahoe Forest Gateway—
Zrelak Acquisition
40 Acre Conservation League





Source: Maxar



1803-LC: Tahoe Forest Gateway—
Zrelak Acquisition
40 Acre Conservation League



Project Area



Tahoe Forest Gateway



0 2,000 4,000
Feet

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: Tahoe Forest Gateway – Zrelak Acquisition (SNC #1803-LC)

Project Location – Specific: 700 Blue Canyon Road, Alta, CA 95701. APN #062-252-015-000 and 016-000. Adjacent to Highway 80, just west of Emigrant Gap, between Blue Canyon and Nyack, approximately 70 miles east of Sacramento, just west of the Nyack Road exit.

Project Location - City: Alta

Project Location - County: Placer

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has approved a grant in the amount of \$545,000 to the 40 Acre Conservation League for the Tahoe Forest Gateway-Zrelak Acquisition project (Project) consisting of a 26-acre acquisition of two separate properties in the community of Alta / Blue Canyon just west of Emigrant Gap, along Highway 80 in Placer County. The Project, led by the 40 Acre Conservation League (League) is adjacent to the League's existing 650-acre Tahoe Forest Gateway property that was purchased in early 2024, and for which the League is currently exploring the potential to provide public recreation opportunities. The League will acquire fee title to two adjacent parcels from a single willing seller, with the intention of incorporating them into the Tahoe Forest Gateway property. The intent of the acquisition is to conserve forest health on the property; protect and preserve historic structures on the site, including the Blue Canyon Bar/house, a two-person stone jailhouse, and a cookhouse; and potentially provide recreation access from the Tahoe Forest Gateway to public lands to the south. However, no management plan has yet to be developed, approved, or funded at this point.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Project Applicant / Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

40 Acre Conservation League
Darryl Lucien, 40 Acre Conservation League Advisor
562-673-0682
darryl@lucienpartners.com
1017 L Street, #246, Sacramento, CA 95814

Exempt Status:

Categorical Exemption: CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources.

Reasons why project is exempt:

The Project is strictly for the fee title acquisition of property. There is no management plan for the property yet in development, approved, or funded. The Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15325, Transfers of Ownership of Interest in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources. This consists of transfers of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space, habitat, or historical resources. The intent of this fee title acquisition is to improve and conserve forest conditions and historic structures on the property and potentially add to the public recreation access at the Tahoe Forest Gateway property. The Project specifically fits example 15325 (e) the acquisition, sale, or other transfer to preserve historical resources and (f) acquisition, sale, or other transfer to preserve open space or lands for park purposes.

Lead Agency**Contact Person:** Mary Akens**Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** 530-450-5177**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: _____**Title:** _____**Date:** _____**Signed by Lead Agency:** Yes**Signed by Applicant:** No**Date received for filing at OPR:** _____**Authority cited:** Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.**Reference:** Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Agenda Item 9: Proposition 68 Grant Program Approval

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):

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

These allocations are used for local assistance grants, as well as program support and California's administration of the bond. The SNC Governing Board approved Proposition 68 funds to be used to support local assistance grant programs towards the Regional Goals outlined in the SNC's Strategic Plan. These programs were:

- Forest & Watershed Health
- Strategic Land Conservation
- Vibrant Recreation & Tourism
- Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities.

The Budget Act of 2018 appropriated the full \$20,625,000 of local assistance available for SNC's Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The SNC administered a Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program cycle, and the SNC Governing Board awarded the full appropriation in 35 grants throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The Budget Act of 2018 and the Budget Act of 2020 together appropriated \$15,675,000 for local assistance towards SNC purposes. The SNC administered multiple rounds of the Forest and Watershed Health, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, Strategic Land Conservation, and Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Grant programs. Between 2019 and 2022, the SNC Governing Board awarded the full amount available in 37 grants throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region.

In September 2024, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill 157 (Gabriel), amending the Budget Act of 2024. This amendment allocated \$5 million of Proposition 68 funds to the SNC to be granted to the 40 Acre Conservation League (40ACL) for purposes consistent with Proposition 68 and SNC grant guidelines.

Current Status

Consistent with SNC's bond roll-out plan and pending budget approval, staff is preparing for \$4,111,000 to be appropriated from Proposition 68, Public Resources Code, section 80110, subd. (b)(9), for "purposes consistent with SNC's governing statute." This funding is comprised of \$4,075,000 of not-yet-appropriated funds, and \$36,000 from grants that have closed with unspent funds. The SNC's Area Representatives were asked to consider the needs and priorities within their respective Subregions, and based on conversations with stakeholders, SNC staff recommends these funds be used to administer a cycle of the grant program focused on recreation and tourism.

In December 2018, the SNC Governing Board approved Vibrant Recreation & Tourism Directed Grant Program Guidelines. These guidelines reflected the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Regional goal in the SNC Strategic Plan. Grant cycles have been administered under those guidelines, with Board-approved guideline Companion Documents identifying the detailed priorities and processes for individual grant cycles.

To administer a new cycle of the grant program focused on recreation and tourism, staff is recommending the SNC Governing Board approve administrative updates to the grant guidelines and approve a guideline Companion Document outlining priorities and processes for the upcoming grant cycle.

Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program Guidelines

The SNC recognizes the fundamental connection between sustainable recreation, tourism, and equitable outdoor access across the Region, the health and resilience of Sierra-Cascade communities, and the ecological health of California's watersheds and forests. Working with partners to strategically implement activities supporting recreation, tourism, and outdoor access will protect these benefits and the resources that are unique to the Sierra-Cascade Region. This program aims to support innovative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities, and increase access to public lands in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The latest Vibrant Recreation & Tourism Directed Grant Program Guidelines reflected the Vibrant Recreation & Tourism Regional Goal in SNC's 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. In June 2024, the SNC Governing Board approved a new [2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#). The new Strategic Plan still includes a recreation and tourism focus in the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Regional Goal, which is consistent with the purposes and actions of the existing grant guidelines. However, there are changes to nomenclature, reflections of SNC's now-expanded service area, and a focus on current state priorities. As such, staff is recommending that administrative updates be made to the recreation and tourism grant guidelines. These updates include:

- Program title change to the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program.
- Reflecting the expanded Sierra-Cascade Region service area.
- Reflecting the revised Regional Goals in the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.
- Reflecting new state strategies and plans:
 - [California Climate Adaptation Strategy](#)
 - California's [Outdoors for All Initiative](#) and [Strategy](#),
 - California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's [Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Fire Resilience](#)
- Minor language adjustments to provide increased clarity.

[Access the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program Guidelines.](#)

FY 2025 – 2027 Companion Document for the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Guidelines

The Companion Document identifies the program priorities and the timeline and process for the individual grant cycle. Staff members at the SNC are recommending the approach below:

Program Priorities

Staff recommends this cycle of the program include the following focus areas:

- 1. Build Climate Resilience**
Support the planning, development, and maintenance of recreation and outdoor infrastructure that anticipates or adapts to increased use and pressure from climate change and visitors escaping extreme weather. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.
- 2. Improve/Increase Access for All**
Improve and/or increase access to nature, including for communities that have not traditionally had equitable access through grants that result in either the implementation or identification, prioritization, and preparation for capital improvement projects. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection. Establish spaces for people and nature to thrive.
- 3. Landscape-scale Assessments**
Support landscape-scale partnerships to develop an assessment of landscape

conditions and risks to recreational infrastructure and other assets. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

Program Process

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program supports planning projects and implementation projects, but each project must be either planning or implementation; the project types may not be combined into one grant award.

Consistent with the requirements of Proposition 68, all projects must either plan for or implement capital improvement projects that will benefit California citizens for no less than 30 years.

All grant awards will be limited to no more than \$500,000.

As the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program is a directed grant program, proposals are developed in conjunction with the SNC. To initiate consideration of a project, an applicant should contact the appropriate SNC Area Representative or other SNC staff.

Proposals are accepted on a continuous basis and will be considered on a quarterly cycle.

[Access the FY 2025 – 2027 Companion Document to the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program Guidelines.](#)

Next Steps

Upon Board approval, SNC staff will develop a program announcement, proposal forms, and evaluation materials for the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program. Depending on the FY2025-2026 budget appropriation, SNC will announce the program in July 2025, collaborate with partners to develop projects, and have the first quarterly review of concept proposals in December 2025. The first recommended grant awards could be brought to the Governing Board for consideration as soon as June 2026.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board:

- a. Approve the updated *Sierra Nevada Conservancy Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program Guidelines*,**

- b. Approve the *FY 2025 – 2027 Companion Document to the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program Guidelines*, and**
- c. Contingent on FY 2025-2026 budget appropriations, authorize staff to implement the program with Proposition 68 funds appropriated to the SNC in the Budget Act of 2025.**

DRAFT



SUSTAINABLE RECREATION, TOURISM, AND EQUITABLE OUTDOOR ACCESS

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Updated June 2025

Directed Grant Program

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The mission of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra-Cascade Region, its communities, and the people of California. The Strategic Plan of the SNC identifies a Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access goal aimed at enhancing, promoting, and developing equitable and sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The bipartisan [Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act](#) (Act), enacted in 2004 and commencing with Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 33300, established the SNC; Sections 33343 and 33346 set forth the authority for SNC to award grants of funds in order to carry out the purposes of the Act.

The statute that created the SNC emphasizes the importance of carrying out the mission in an integrated and complementary manner and the important role an organization providing strategic direction and resources to the Region can play. The SNC's activities fall under seven statutorily mandated program areas:

1. Increasing the opportunity for tourism and recreation in the Region
2. Protecting, conserving, and restoring the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources
3. Aiding in the preservation of working landscapes
4. Reducing the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfire
5. Protecting and improving water and air quality
6. Assisting the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program
7. Enhancing public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public

The [SNC Strategic Plan](#) (Plan) is developed in accordance with the Act and provides direction for SNC activities and the Grant Guidelines (Guidelines). The Plan identifies four Regional Goals:

1. Healthy Forests and Watersheds
2. Resilient Sierra-Cascade Communities
3. Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access
4. Conservation and Stewardship of Natural & Working Lands

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access goal concentrates on efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Sierra-Cascade Region. The Region offers tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities that both rely on healthy watersheds and forests and support

tourism and economic growth in California’s rural communities. For many of the communities in the Region, revenue from recreation and tourism represents the largest portions of their economies, and jobs from recreation provide residents with the opportunity to work and thrive in their communities. The Sierra-Cascade’s outdoor recreation spectrum runs the full gamut: from highly developed ski resorts to backcountry wilderness; thousands of miles of trails for off-highway and over-snow vehicles, mountain biking, equestrianism, and hiking; world-class fishing and hunting opportunities for a wide range of game; golf courses, marinas, wineries, and public parks; wildlife refuges; caves; and wild rivers. There is also a rich collection of cultural, historic, heritage, and tribal tourism attractions that are tied to both Californian and national history. Today, however, many of these benefits are at risk. A changing climate will likely affect recreational activities dependent on snow, as well as summer activities dependent on water resources. If the size and scope of severe fire and tree mortality continue to grow due to climate change and drought, these resources and economic contributors may disappear and take centuries, if ever, to return. A strategic approach to the development of sustainable recreation and tourism is necessary to enable both economic and natural resource resiliency against these challenges. Actions under this goal are intended to support recreation planning and infrastructure, including on public lands; help communities anticipate, avoid, and mitigate challenges associated with high recreation use and recreation-based economies; and improve outdoor access for communities that have not traditionally had equitable access to nature.

The [Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program \(WIP\)](#) is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California’s primary watershed through increased investment, needed policy changes, and increased infrastructure. This comprehensive effort is organized and coordinated by the SNC in close partnership with other federal, state, and local agencies, as well as diverse stakeholders, and aims to increase the pace and scale of restoration in the Region. The SNC has established the WIP as the SNC’s overarching initiative, providing a holistic approach to SNC’s mission, recognizing the inherent interrelationships and dependencies between the Regional Goals.

Related State Priorities

The [California Climate Adaptation Strategy](#) (“Strategy”) links together the state’s existing and planned climate adaptation efforts, showing how they fit together to achieve California’s six climate resilience priorities. The Strategy is organized around outcome-based priorities, enabling a coordinated, integrated approach to building climate resilience.

Through California’s [Outdoors for All Initiative](#) and [Strategy](#), Governor Gavin Newsom has prioritized building a California for All, where all the state’s residents can thrive. Enabling equitable access to nature and the outdoors is a key component for advancing this commitment and is the fundamental purpose of the Outdoors for All Initiative. California’s Outdoors for All Initiative is expanding parks and outdoor spaces in communities that need

them most, supporting programs to connect people who lack access, fostering a sense of belonging for all Californians in the outdoors, and much more.

The [California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force](#) includes a Sustainable & Accessible Recreation Key Working Group, which developed a [Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Fire Resilience](#). The joint strategy provides a roadmap for improved access to sustainable outdoor recreation, with a focus on areas where wildfires are impacting those opportunities throughout California.

Program Funding

Proposition 68

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 added Division 46 to the Public Resources Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds, and the California Legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for purposes identified in the Act. Proposition 68 recognizes the critical importance of recreation and tourism to California's economy and ecology and specifically directs funds to be used to support and expand recreation economies, opportunities, and access to outdoor recreation.

Public Resources Code, Section 80110, subd. (b)(9) allocates \$30 million of the bond funds to SNC in accordance with SNC's governing statute for its specified purposes. It is the intent of the people of California that these funds be invested in projects that:

- Advance the purposes of SNC, as identified in its governing statute and Strategic Plan (Pub. Resources Code, § 80110, subd. (b)(9));
- Provide public benefits that address the most critical statewide needs and priorities (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, subd. (b)(1).);
- Leverage private, federal, or local funding or produce the greatest public benefit (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, subd. (b)(2));
- To the extent practicable, provide workforce training, contractor, and job opportunities for disadvantaged communities (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, (b)(5)); and
- To the extent practicable, measure greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestrations associated with projects (Pub. Resources Code, § 80001, subd. (b)(7)).

Additionally, Proposition 68 states that:

- At least 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to Chapter 8 shall be allocated to projects serving severely disadvantaged communities (SDAC). (Pub. Resources Code, § 80008, subd. (a)(1)); and

- To the extent permissible under State General Obligation Bond Law and with the concurrence of the Director of Finance, up to 5 percent of funds available through Proposition 68 may be available for community access projects. (Pub. Resources Code, § 80008, subd. (c).) Proposition 68 defines community access as engagement programs, technical assistance, or facilities that maximize safe and equitable physical admittance, especially for low-income communities, to natural or cultural resources, community education, or recreational amenities.

Additional Funding Sources

If additional funding sources become available, with purposes consistent with SNC's Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program as described in these Guidelines, SNC may direct those funding sources to the support of this grant program.

Project requirements or limitations tied to state law, specific funding sources or state budget allocations will be reflected in project development and grant agreements.

Program Objectives

The SNC recognizes the fundamental connection between equitable and sustainable recreation and tourism across the Region, the health and resilience of Sierra-Cascade communities, and the ecological health of California's watersheds and forests. Working with partners to strategically implement activities supporting recreation and tourism will protect these benefits and the resources that are unique to the Sierra-Cascade Region.

This program aims to support innovative, collaborative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increase access to public lands in the Sierra-Cascade Region. Projects funded through this program should accomplish one or more of the following across a defined geographic region:

- Assess conditions, existing resources, needs, and opportunities to support or promote recreation and tourism throughout the Region and identify highest priority activities.
- Identify, create, and participate in partnerships to support the development of equitable and sustainable recreation and tourism throughout the Region.
- Support projects or collaboratives that achieve sustainable recreation and tourism objectives throughout the Region.

Community access projects that address collaborative recreation and tourism may be supported under this program. Public Resources Code, Section 80008, subd. (c) in Proposition 68 defines "community access" as engagement programs, technical assistance, or facilities that maximize safe and equitable physical admittance, especially

for low-income communities, to natural or cultural resources, community education, or recreational amenities. Such projects should include at least one of the following elements:

- Transportation
- Physical activity programming
- Resource interpretation
- Multilingual translation
- Natural science
- Workforce development and career pathways
- Education
- Communication related to water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and other outdoor pursuits

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access program is a directed grant program. Concept proposals are accepted on a continuous basis and projects are developed in conjunction with the SNC. There is no deadline-oriented Request for Proposals or competitive scoring review.

II. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Applicant Eligibility

Grant funds may be authorized for:

- Public agencies: Any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency.
- Qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations: "Nonprofit Organization" means a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, is in good standing with the state of California, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC.
- Eligible Tribal Entities: An Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register; (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe.

Notes:

- The SNC's governing statute does not allow grants to mutual water companies.
- Tribes should consult with SNC regarding the legal entity applying for and managing grant funds.

Project Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC under this program, projects must meet all the following criteria:

- Be located within the Sierra-Cascade Region
- Be consistent with the Program Objectives described in these guidelines.
- Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the [SNC Strategic Plan](#) and the [Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program \(WIP\)](#).
- Meet all requirements of [Proposition 68](#)
- Result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.

Consistent with provisions of Proposition 68 and objectives of the proposed project, the SNC may give favorable consideration to projects that:

- Employ a collaborative approach in project development or implementation.

- Result in a beneficial impact across a defined geographic region.
- Directly benefit severely disadvantaged or disadvantaged communities.
- Consider climate impacts and risks and identify specific adaptation strategies or actions to remedy climate-related vulnerability.
- Leverage private, federal, or local resources.

Examples of potential eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- The development of a recreation and tourism collaborative or partnership for a defined geographic region.
- The implementation of priority projects identified through a collaborative process.
- A collaborative process to identify and prioritize recreation and tourism needs across a defined geographic region.
- Innovative public-private partnerships to address recreation and tourism-related challenges, including infrastructure and transportation needs.
- Promotion of recreation and tourism attractions and opportunities across a defined geographic region.
- Development of resource interpretation or communication programs for underserved populations, identified as a priority need through a collaborative process.
- Design of sustainable recreation and tourism programs related to and by Native American tribes.

Please contact [SNC Area Representatives](#) to determine project eligibility, initiate project development, or to identify alternative funding opportunities and other assistance.

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include:

- Grants to service or repay loans
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation.

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If applicants have questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their [SNC Area Representatives](#).

Eligible Costs

Direct Project Costs

For project costs to be eligible for reimbursement, the costs must be within the scope of the project, supported by appropriate documentation, and completed by the required deadline as identified in the grant agreement. Costs related to project-specific performance measures, project reporting, and required signage are eligible costs; if being requested by the applicant, these costs must be included in the project budget.

Administrative Costs

Administrative costs are shared overhead expenses rather than direct costs. Administrative costs may not exceed 15 percent of the SNC-funded direct project costs. In the event of an audit, projects with budgets that include administrative costs must be able to document the appropriateness of these expenses. A typical method for documentation of administrative overhead expenses is a Cost Allocation Plan (CAP). A CAP is a formal accounting plan used to calculate and document the method for recovering overhead costs. The SNC strongly recommends that grantees consult with an accounting professional to develop an appropriate method for calculating overhead rate and prepare a CAP.

Ineligible Costs

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing or increasing a legal defense fund or endowment.
- Monetary donations to other organizations
- Food or refreshments
- Costs associated with fundraising
- Grant-writing expenses
- Any expenses incurred before a grant agreement is executed or after the project completion deadline, as identified in the grant agreement.

NOTE: If a proposal contains ineligible costs, SNC will consult with the applicant to confirm viability of project if those costs are removed from the budget in advance of consideration by the SNC Board.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Proposal Initiation

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access program is a directed grant program. Proposals are accepted on a rolling basis and projects are developed in conjunction with the SNC. There is no deadline-oriented Request for Proposals or competitive scoring review.

To initiate consideration of a project, a project organizer should review the Companion Document for the current grant cycle and contact the appropriate [SNC Area Representative](#). The Area Representative will assist with determining if the project meets SNC criteria. If it is determined that SNC will consider partnering on the project, the Area Representative will share the SNC Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Proposal Form with the organizer and assist in developing the project and completing the Proposal Form.

Right of Access Requirements

For any projects that involve planning for or implementation of on-the-ground site improvement activities, proposals must include a letter from all property owners/managers indicating their awareness of and willingness to implement the project and granting access to the property to conduct pre-project due diligence or other necessary activities.

Environmental Documents

The SNC requires all proposals to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) at the time the Board authorizes a grant. The SNC relies heavily on previously completed environmental analyses to make required findings. Since the complexity of CEQA compliance will vary depending on the proposed project activities and the type of applicant, it is very important that applicants consult with SNC staff as early as possible to discuss which CEQA documents will be required. In cases where a project is not exempt from CEQA and the partners do not have standing to act as Lead Agency, the SNC will consider acting as Lead Agency.

NOTE: When projects have previously completed CEQA documentation and the baseline environmental conditions of the project area have significantly changed (due to fire, tree

mortality, etc.), applicants must provide confirmation from the Lead Agency responsible for preparing the original CEQA documents that the documents remain valid.

Long-term Management

Projects receiving support through this program must demonstrate a clear and enduring public benefit. This includes long-term viability of any programs developed through the project, as well as on-the-ground site improvement components of a project. All site improvement project sites shall be maintained, operated, and used in a manner consistent with the purposes of the project. Additionally, the grantee and/or property owner shall not use any portion of the project site for mitigation or as security for any debt. The long-term management plan for site improvement or program development projects must include a description of how project deliverables will be managed and maintained over time, by whom, and how funding will be provided for such work.

The SNC and Related Monitoring

On-the-ground site improvement projects shall be subject to monitoring for site conditions. The SNC and its officers, employees, agents, and representatives shall have access to monitor the project site for a minimum of twenty-five (25) years following completion of the project.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will lead landscape-scale quantification of greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration for all projects funded under Proposition 68, where feasible. Grantees will not be required to make these calculations for each project, but instead submit base information (such as acres, land type, activities) for CNRA use. This requirement will only apply when feasible for a project.

Performance Measures and Reporting

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to the SNC achieving its programmatic goals. Detailed information and recommended performance measures can be found on [SNC Performance Measures](#).

- The SNC requires all grantees consider four specific quantitative performance measures:
 1. Number and Type of Jobs Created

2. Number and Value of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities
 3. Resources Leveraged for the Sierra-Cascade Region
 4. Number of People Reached
- In addition, each grantee will be required to report on one to three additional project-specific performance measures that will help describe project outcomes in a measurable way. Examples of additional performance measures can be found on [SNC Performance Measures](#).
 - Applicants may also propose alternative performance measures, which will be subject to the approval of SNC staff if the grant is authorized. The proposed measures will be finalized in consultation with SNC staff prior to grant agreement approval.
 - All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline. The final report must include data associated with the project-performance measures.

Tribal Consultation

On September 19, 2011, Governor Brown issued [Executive Order B-10-11](#), which provides, among other things, it is the policy of the administration that every state agency and department subject to executive control implement effective government-to-government consultation with California Native American tribes. The SNC staff will work to implement all aspects of SNC's [Tribal Consultation Policy](#) when considering projects. The SNC strongly encourages Native American involvement in projects. The SNC can assist project proponents with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area and contact information for those tribes.

Consultation and Cooperation With Local Agencies

In compliance with the SNC's governing statute, local government agencies, such as counties, cities, and local water districts, are notified of eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

For all proposals under consideration, SNC staff will notify the county and/or city and public water agency affected (when appropriate) and offer the opportunity to submit comments. The SNC will make all reasonable efforts to address concerns raised by local governments. Individual SNC Boardmembers representing each geographic Subregion within the SNC boundary will also be notified of project proposals in their respective Subregions.

If there are privacy concerns related to information contained in a proposal, please notify SNC staff before submission.

California Conservation Corps and California Association of Local Conservation Corps

Per Proposition 68 requirements, all projects that involve an on-the-ground site improvement component shall consult with representatives of both the California Conservation Corps (CCC) (Email: Prop68@ccc.ca.gov), and California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC) (Email: inquiry@prop68communitycorps.org) to determine the feasibility of Corps participation. Projects that do not include a site improvement component do not need to notify the Corps. The Corps has developed a Proposition 68 webpage that fully describes the consultation process. The process takes 10 business days to complete after an email submission of the Corps Consultation Form. Please consult with your [SNC Area Representative](#) to learn more details regarding use of CCC or CALCC for implementation of the project.

IV. GRANT PROCESS

Project Development

Following SNC Board approval of the Guidelines, SNC will announce the opening of the grant program and begin accepting proposals on a continuous basis. Any additional requirements or restrictions, including those specific to additional funding sources or new state budget requirements, will be specified in the Companion Document for the current grant cycle. The SNC will undertake a thorough outreach effort to announce the program to diverse populations.

As a directed grant program, SNC may be involved in the development of potential projects. The initial step to bring a project forward to SNC is to contact the appropriate [SNC Area Representative](#) to determine whether a potential project is eligible for consideration and for assistance in project development.

As part of the project development process, organizers are encouraged to engage other stakeholders and Native American tribes. The SNC will notify county, water, and tribal representatives, as described in Section III.

Project Proposals

After determination that a project meets the requirements of the program and SNC agrees to engage in project development, SNC will provide the project organizer with the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Proposal Form. In addition to addressing the Program Requirements described in Section III, all proposals are required to specify the following:

- A description of how the project will directly result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.
- A clear connection to the goals of the SNC Strategic Plan and Proposition 68, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program. An anticipated timeline of activities and responsible parties through completion of the project.
- Detailed budget for project expenses, including resources leveraged from other sources and a narrative description of expenses.
- If and how the project may benefit disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged communities. For a map of community designations, please visit the [Parks for California](#) website.
- Plans for long-term management of project outcomes

V. EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Evaluation Process

The SNC will work closely with project proponents in the development of the project and project proposal. As such, project evaluation will not come after submission of a proposal but instead will occur upon initial discussion and throughout the project development process. The following evaluation aspects will be considerations in project development:

1. The project will be reviewed by a technical expert for technical merit.
2. The project will be reviewed by an environmental compliance expert.
3. Proposals will be shared with appropriate county/city planning, water agency (if applicable), and tribal representatives, as well as SNC's Boardmember county liaisons. If there are any privacy concerns related to information in an application, please discuss them with SNC staff before submission.
4. An SNC evaluation team will independently review and meet to discuss the proposals based on the evaluation criteria described in the following section.
5. The evaluation team will prepare a recommendation for SNC's executive officer.
6. After the evaluation process is complete, including all due diligence and analysis by SNC, funding recommendation(s) will be placed on a future Board meeting agenda at the discretion of SNC's executive officer.

NOTE: The SNC will consider the geographic distribution of projects, project locations related to disadvantaged communities, and project types, and may prioritize awards based on these considerations.

Evaluation Criteria

Project proposals will not move forward with recommendation to SNC's executive officer until the following criteria have been addressed to the satisfaction of SNC and the project proponent:

1. **Alignment with funding and program goals and related state priorities**
The degree to which a project aligns with:
 - Current funding cycle priorities
 - The [SNC Strategic Plan](#)
 - [Proposition 68](#) or other funding source
 - State planning priorities previously addressed in these guidelines. Other local, Regional, state, or federal plans.

2. Public / Natural Resource Benefits

The degree to which the project provides multiple tangibles: enduring, public benefits with a high likelihood the benefits will be realized. Is the need for the specific project clearly identified and explained? Are the natural resources and economic benefits explained and reasonable? Will the project benefit disadvantaged communities?

3. Project Readiness

The degree to which the project is ready to proceed promptly, if funded. Is project planning and coordination complete? Is access secured, environmental compliance, permitting, or other necessary preparations complete, as appropriate? Is all funding identified or secured?

4. Project Design

Clarity on the project purpose, goals, deliverables, and schedule. Is the project approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives and deliverables of the project?

5. Project Budget

The degree to which the budget is adequate and reasonable to implement the project. Are costs clearly identified, supported, and meet reasonable levels of fees for service?

6. Long-Term Management

Is a plan, funding, and the responsible entity in place for carrying out long-term management? How will public benefits be sustained?

7. Likelihood of Success

Does the project organizer have the necessary experience and sufficient capacity to implement the project as described?

8. Community Support and Collaboration

The degree to which the project has public and institutional support at the local, Regional, or larger scale - and the local community or other stakeholders are engaged in project planning or delivery. Was the project developed as part of collaboration? Is there clear and demonstrable community outreach and support for the project and any community economic benefits? Is there tribal support for or tribal participation in the project?

9. Landscape-Level Context

The degree to which the proposed project is part of a larger plan, coordinated effort, or is proximate to public lands or recreational amenities. Does the project support a broader, cumulative effort to restore/protect strategic goals?

10. Leveraging

The degree to which a project provides in-kind services and/or secured federal, state, private, or local cost share funding. Have non-monetary and/or funding resources of agencies and organizations other than SNC been identified and secured?

Grant Awards and Agreements

For each awarded grant, the SNC develops an individual grant agreement with detailed provisions and requirements specific to that project. Please be aware that if an entity is awarded a grant from the SNC, the provisions listed below will apply:

- Administrative costs are limited to no more than 15 percent of the actual direct project costs.
- Grant-eligible costs may be incurred by the grantee only after the grantee has entered into a fully executed agreement with the SNC.
- All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline.
- To the extent practicable, site improvement projects will be required to include onsite signage indicating the project was funded by the SNC and the applicable funding source. The required acknowledgement language is included in the grant agreement and logo graphics are available on the SNC website. Reasonable costs associated with creation and installation of the sign(s) are eligible expenses and should be included in the project budget.

The SNC will provide assistance to the grantee to ensure the grantee's clear understanding and interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grant.

For applicants interested in more information about the standard grant agreement clauses and administrative requirements once a grant is authorized, please contact SNC.

VI. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Act	Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act
CALCC	California Association of Local Conservation Corps
CAP	Cost Allocation Plan
CCC	California Conservation Corps
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
Guidelines	Grant Guidelines
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Plan	Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Plan
PRC	Public Resources Code
SDAC	Severely Disadvantaged Community
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
Strategy	California Climate Adaptation Strategy
WIP	Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program

VII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Unless otherwise stated, the terms used in these Guidelines shall have the following meanings:

Administrative Costs – Administrative costs include any expense, which is not directly related to project implementation. Similar to the traditional definition of “overhead,” administrative costs include shared costs, such as rent, utilities, travel, per diem, office equipment, and services such as internet, phone, shared bookkeeping costs, etc.

Applicant – The entity applying for an SNC grant pursuant to these Guidelines.

Application – The individual grant application form and its required attachments pursuant to the SNC Grant program.

Board – The governing body of the SNC as established by PRC Section 33321.

CEQA – [The California Environmental Quality Act](#) as set forth in the PRC Section 21000 et seq. CEQA is a law establishing policies and procedures that require agencies to identify, disclose to decision makers and the public, and attempt to lessen significant impacts to environmental and historical resources that may occur as a result of a proposed project to be undertaken, funded, or approved by a local or state agency.

CEQA/NEPA Compliance – Activities an entity performs to meet the requirements of CEQA and/or NEPA.

Collaborative– Cooperation between stakeholders with different interests to solve a problem or make decisions that cut across jurisdictional or other boundaries; often used when information is widely dispersed, and no single individual, agency, or group has sufficient resources to address the issue alone.

Community Access – Engagement programs, technical assistance, or facilities that maximize safe and equitable physical admittance, especially for low-income communities, to natural or cultural resources, community education, or recreational amenities.

Disadvantaged Community – A community with a median household income less than 80 percent of the statewide average. [View maps of Disadvantaged Community \(DAC\) areas.](#)

Eligible Costs – Expenses incurred by the grantee during the performance period of an approved agreement, which may be reimbursed by the SNC.

Forests – For the purposes of these Guidelines, forests are defined as areas of the Sierra-Cascade Region that are characterized by predominantly conifer and mixed-conifer forests.

Grant – Funds made available to a grantee for eligible costs during an agreement term.

Grant Agreement – An agreement between the SNC and the grantee specifying the payment of funds by the SNC for the performance of the project scope according to the terms of the agreement by the grantee.

Grantee – An entity that has an agreement with the SNC for grant funds.

In-kind Contributions – Non-monetary donations that are utilized on the project, including materials and services. These donations shall be eligible as “other sources of funds” when providing budgetary information for application purposes.

NEPA – [The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969](#), as amended. NEPA is a federal law requiring consideration of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project whenever a federal agency has discretionary jurisdiction over some aspect of that project.

Nonprofit Organization – A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in PRC Section 33300 et seq.

Other Sources of Funds – Cash or in-kind contributions necessary or used to complete the site improvement/restoration project beyond the grant funds provided by this program.

Performance Measure – A quantitative measure used by the SNC to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes.

Permitting – The process of obtaining any necessary regulatory approvals from appropriate governmental agencies to implement the project.

Pre-Project Due Diligence – The analysis necessary to prepare a future on-the-ground project for implementation.

Preservation – Protection, rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

Project – The work to be accomplished with grant funds.

Proposition 68 – The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 which authorizes the issuance of bonds to finance a drought, water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and outdoor access for all program.

Public Agencies – Any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency

Region or Sierra Cascade Region – The Sierra Nevada Region as defined in PRC Section 33302 (f).

Resilience – The ability of an ecosystem to regain structural and functional attributes that have suffered harm from stress or disturbance.

Restoration – Activities that initiate, accelerate, or return the components and processes of a damaged site to a previous historical state.

Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) – A community with a median household income less than 60% of the statewide average. [View maps of Severely Disadvantaged Community \(SDAC\) areas.](#)

Site Improvements – Project activities involving the physical improvement or restoration of land.

SNC – Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Total Cost – The amount of the Other Sources of Funds combined with the SNC Grant request amount that is designated and necessary for the completion of a project

Tribal Entities – Includes any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register. (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe

DRAFT



SUSTAINABLE RECREATION, TOURISM, AND EQUITABLE OUTDOOR ACCESS

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

June 2025

Companion Document

Directed Grant Program

FY 2025 – 2027 Funding Cycle

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Introduction

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is pleased to announce the next funding cycle for the [Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program](#), effective July 1, 2025.

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Guidelines (Grant Guidelines) released in 2019 and updated in 2025 is the governing document for the program. This companion document describes the program priorities for this funding cycle. It is intended to provide specific details for this funding cycle but should be considered in conjunction with the grant guidelines.

The SNC anticipates the availability of \$4.1 million for the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program in this funding cycle, during Fiscal Years 2025-2027. However, the amount of funding available is subject to change.

Program Priorities for Fiscal Years 2025-2027

The SNC recognizes the fundamental connection between sustainable recreation, tourism, and equitable outdoor access across the Region, the health and resilience of Sierra-Cascade communities, and the ecological health of California's watersheds and forests. Working with partners to strategically implement activities supporting recreation, tourism, and equitable outdoor access will protect these benefits and the resources that are unique to the Sierra-Cascade Region. This program aims to support innovative efforts to enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities and increase access for all to public lands in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

The specific focus areas of the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program for Fiscal Years 2025-2027 are outlined below. Please note that these focus areas are more limited than the overall program described in the grant guidelines. Projects must fall within one of the focus areas to be considered for funding.

- 1. Build Climate Resilience**

Support the planning, development, and maintenance of recreation and outdoor infrastructure that anticipates or adapts to increased use and pressure from climate change and visitors escaping extreme weather. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water-quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

- 2. Improve/Increase Access for All**

Improve and/or increase access to nature, including for communities that have not traditionally had equitable access through grants which result in either the implementation or identification, prioritization, and preparation for capital improvement projects. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water-quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

- 1. Landscape-scale Assessments**

Support landscape-scale partnerships to develop an assessment of landscape conditions and risks to recreational infrastructure and other assets. Projects must clearly have multiple benefits, such as tourism as well as education, recreation infrastructure with water-quality benefits, or recreation with habitat protection.

Consistent with the requirements of Proposition 68, all projects must either plan for or implement capital improvement projects that will benefit California citizens for no less than 30 years.

Project Types

The Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program supports planning projects and implementation projects, as described below. Each project proposal must identify whether it is a planning or implementation project; the project types may not be combined.

All grant awards will be limited to no more than \$500,000.

Planning Projects

Planning projects include project development and other pre-implementation activities that will result in specific, identified future on-the-ground project(s). Future actions resulting from planning activities should be described in the proposal. Lead agencies for CEQA/NEPA compliance with future actions should be identified, if applicable.

Examples of potential planning project activities include, but are not limited to:

- The development of a recreation and tourism collaborative or partnership that identifies and prioritizes site-improvement projects across a large geographic region.
- Baseline studies, cultural resources, biological, botanical, aquatic, soil, hydrologic, wildlife, timber, or other studies/surveys necessary for the implementation of a future on-the-ground recreation project.

Implementation Projects

Implementation projects are the execution of on-the-ground projects. Examples of potential implementation projects include, but are not limited to:

- The implementation of priority projects identified through a collaborative process.
- Trail building and/or improvements.
- Accessible trails or recreation access points.
- Site improvements that minimize impacts to natural resources, e.g. food storage lockers, campsite improvements, toilets, re-routing trails around sensitive areas, trailhead improvements that protect resources.

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Planning projects that do not identify specific future on-the ground projects.

- Funding to support ongoing programs that do not result in on-the-ground site improvement.
- Research, education, outreach, or event-related projects, although these types of activities may be included as a small part of the overall implementation of a project eligible for SNC grant funds.
- Grants to service or repay loans.
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation.
- Any projects that do not meet the program priorities described in this companion document.

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If applicants have questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their SNC Area Representative.

Additional Considerations

Engagement with California Native American Tribes

The SNC strongly encourages engagement with Native American tribes in the development, planning, and implementation of projects and will prioritize projects in which tribal communities are involved. The SNC staff can assist project applicants with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area and provide contact information for those tribes. The SNC will notify the appropriate tribal contacts regarding all eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

Severely Disadvantaged Communities

Proposition 68 states that at least 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to Chapter 8 shall be allocated to projects serving severely disadvantaged communities (SDAC). (Pub. Resources Code, § 80008, subd. (a)(1)). The SNC may prioritize projects that serve SDAC. [View maps of Severely Disadvantaged Community \(SDAC\) areas.](#)

Geographic Distribution of Funds

The SNC strives to achieve an equitable balance in the distribution of grant funds across the Sierra-Cascade Region, appropriate to program priorities and the variety of needs across the Region. The SNC may take the geographic distribution of funds into consideration when awarding projects.

Program Process

Project Development

As the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access program is a directed grant program, proposals are developed in conjunction with SNC. To initiate consideration of a project, an applicant should contact the appropriate [SNC Area Representative](#) or other SNC staff. The Area Representative will assist the applicant organizer to determine if the project meets SNC criteria. If it is determined that SNC will consider partnering on the project, the Area Representative will share the Concept Proposal Form with the applicant and assist in developing the project. Upon review of the Concept Proposal, applicants may be directed to develop a Final Proposal in conjunction with SNC staff.

Schedule

The program will be announced in July 2025. Proposals will be accepted on a continuous basis and considered on a quarterly cycle.

- **December 2025:** Review of Concept Proposals received by December 1, 2025, and direction given to develop Final Proposals.
- **March 2026:** Review of Final Proposals received by March 1, 2026 and decisions regarding continued due diligence activities and potential recommendations to the SNC Governing Board.
- **June 2026:** If due diligence is complete, Final Proposals recommended to the SNC Governing Board for grant award.

The cycle will be repeated every quarter until funds are no longer available.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Agenda Item 10: Proposition 4 Grant Program Approval

Background

In March 2021, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board approved the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines (Program). The specific area of focus for this grant program was the implementation of forest-health projects that address wildfire recovery and resilience and support the goals of California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP).

In November of 2024, California voters approved Proposition 4, a law proposed by Senate Bill 867, to fund water, climate, wildfire, and natural resource projects across the state of California. Proposition 4, among other things, will allocate \$1,500,000,000 for wildfire and forest-resilience programs. (Pub. Resources Code, section 91500, *et seq.*) Of this amount, \$33,500,000 was made available to SNC "for watershed improvement, forest health, biomass utilization, chaparral and forest restoration, and workforce development that addresses needs related to this subdivision and is designed to create career pathways for individuals from disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities, or vulnerable populations." (Pub. Resources Code, section 91520, subd. (h).)

On March 1, 2025, Governor Newsom issued an emergency proclamation (Proclamation) to confront the severe ongoing risk of catastrophic wildfires that threaten public safety across California. The Proclamation authorizes the secretaries of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal EPA) to determine which projects are eligible for suspension of certain California statutory and regulatory requirements to expedite critical fuels-reduction projects, while at the same time protecting public resources and the environment.

In response to the Governor's Proclamation, the CNRA and CalEPA secretaries developed the [Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan \(EPP\)](#). This is a process by which project proponents may request to have their critical fuels-reduction projects be suspended from several California laws, including, but not limited to, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The types of projects that are eligible for suspension are projects that meet all four of the following requirements:

1. The primary objective of the project is one of these activities:
 - Removal of hazardous, dead, and/or dying trees

- Removal of vegetation for the creation of strategic fuel breaks as identified by approved fire prevention plans, including without limitation, CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plan or Community Wildfire Protection plans
 - Removal of vegetation for community defensible space
 - Removal of vegetation along roadways, highways, and freeways for the creation of safer ingress and egress routes for the public and responders and/or to reduce roadside ignitions
 - Removal of vegetation using cultural traditional ecological knowledge for cultural burning and/or prescribed fire treatments for fuels reduction
 - Maintenance of previously established fuel breaks or fuels-modification projects
2. The request for suspension is submitted in the 2025 calendar year.
 3. Work will be performed or supervised by qualified responsible parties, such as Registered Professional Foresters, Certified Rangeland Managers, qualified vegetation management contractors, qualified incident commanders, certified arborists, certified burn bosses and authorized cultural burners.
 4. Work will follow Best Management Practices (BMPs) and measures identified in the EPP.

Projects that receive suspension must be focused on critical fuels reduction to combat catastrophic fires and promote community safety and resiliency. This includes, but is not limited to, projects identified in CAL FIRE Unit Fire plans, Community Wildfire Protection plans, and Utility Wildfire Mitigation plans, provided they meet the requirements that are identified above.

On April 14, 2025, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 100 (Gabriel) (AB 100), which appropriated \$30.904 million from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Fund (Proposition 4) to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for the purposes authorized in subdivision (h) of Section 91520 of the Public Resources Code. AB 100 also states that the Administrative Procedure Act does not apply to the amendment of existing program guidelines and selection criteria needed to effectuate or implement appropriations of Proposition 4.

The purpose of the expedited funding is to:

- Focus on the highest wildfire resilience priority projects in the Sierra-Cascade Region, including funding projects to protect communities.
- Support projects including those that can utilize the EPP established by CNRA and CalEPA through the Governor's Proclamation.

Current Status

The Governor's Proclamation and AB 100 align with priorities of SNC's existing 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Guidelines. As such, staff has amended those guidelines to meet current needs and seeks the Board's approval of the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program.

The SNC encourages applicants that do not already have environmental compliance to file a suspension request with CNRA and CalEPA through the [Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force website](#). Projects that may be eligible for suspension under the Governor's Proclamation must request approval from the CNRA and CalEPA secretaries by December 31, 2025.

The Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program (Program) seeks to create more resilient forest landscapes and reduce wildfire risk. The climate and ecological benefits of forest-restoration treatments are well known. Ecologically sound forest management, including prescribed fire, and community protection are critical in securing the overall well-being of the Sierra-Cascade Region. The SNC will seek projects that reduce wildfire risk to people and communities. The reduced intensity of wildland fire also makes it safer for firefighting resources to utilize fuel breaks to protect structures if a fire enters the wildland urban interface (WUI). The SNC's staff recommendation is to expedite wildfire-resilience projects so Regional partners will be able to meet the deadline for on-the-ground work commencement as directed in the EPP.

Program Priorities

The primary focus of the Program is protecting people and communities.

California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan identifies three goals that are strongly aligned with the WIP: healthy and resilient natural places, safe communities, and sustainable economies. Both plans also stress the importance of climate resiliency, regionally tailored solutions, the linkages between ecological and economic health, the importance of low-intensity fire, and the need to work strategically across land ownership boundaries.

Additionally, the Program aims to support projects that result in a combination of multiple watershed, ecosystem, and community benefits. Examples of such benefits include the reduced likelihood of high-intensity fire and the negative consequences of such fires; protection and enhancement of natural resources, habitat and recreation; improved air and water quality; increased carbon sequestration and reduced greenhouse (GHG) (greenhouse gas) emissions; and supporting Regional economies.

Recognizing the intent of the funding and importance of the Program to make on-the-ground impacts, all projects funded under this Program must be ready to proceed

immediately upon award, commencing on-the-ground work no later than October 15, 2026. The expectation is that projects will be completed within two years of initiating work on the ground.

Program Implementation

The Program would make \$10,000,000 in Proposition 4 funds available to eligible projects. To be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC under this Program, projects must meet all of the following criteria:

- Have either completed environmental compliance or received approval to implement under the EPP.
- Be an implementation project with on-the-ground improvements resulting in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit.
- Be located within the Sierra-Cascade Region as defined by current SNC governing legislation.
- Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the SNC Strategic Plan.
- Be consistent with the requirements of the funding source and budget provisions.
- Commence on-the-ground work no later than October 15, 2026.
- Be completed by January 1, 2030.

As this Program is intended to support on-the-ground projects that reduce the risks of wildfire as quickly as possible, it is designed to be a directed grant program. As a directed grant program, SNC will work directly with partners to identify eligible projects. Proposals will be accepted on a continuous basis until January 31, 2026, or while funding remains available. Proposals will be evaluated based upon the scoring criteria in the guidelines. A project must receive an evaluation score of 80 points or above to be considered for a funding award recommendation. Recommendations will be made to the SNC Governing Board no less than quarterly. This process will allow the SNC to strategically develop projects and to do so in an administratively efficient manner, expediting on-the-ground projects that will have a real impact on wildfire risk and forest resilience. Consistent with Proposition 4, extra consideration will be given to applications directly benefiting severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged communities, as well as vulnerable populations.

Please follow the link below for the Draft 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines:

- [Draft Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines](#)

Next Steps

The SNC staff will develop announcement, proposal, and evaluation materials for the Program. The SNC will announce the Program and collaborate with partners to develop projects. Staff anticipate recommending projects to the Board during Fiscal Year 2025-26 Board meetings.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board approve the updated *Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines* for \$10 million of the Proposition 4 funding appropriated to the SNC in 2024-25, and authorize staff to implement the Program.

WILDFIRE AND FOREST RESILIENCE

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

June 2025
DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

This grant program is an immediate response to recent legislation and executive orders addressing California’s wildfire crisis.

In November of 2024, California voters approved Proposition 4, a law proposed by Senate Bill 867, to fund water, climate, wildfire, and natural resource projects across the state of California. Proposition 4, among other things, will allocate \$1,500,000,000 for wildfire and forest-resilience programs. (Pub. Resources Code, section 91500, et seq.) Of this amount, \$33,500,000 was made available to SNC as follows: “... for watershed improvement, forest health, biomass utilization, chaparral and forest restoration, and workforce development that addresses needs related to this subdivision and is designed to create career pathways for individuals from disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities, or vulnerable populations.” (Pub. Resources Code, section 91520, subd. (h).)

In April 2025, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 100 (Gabriel), which allocates \$30.9 million from the 2024 Proposition 4 Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Act (Proposition 4) to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) for the purposes of wildfire prevention and forest resilience, including improving local fire prevention capacity, improving forest health and resilience, and reducing the risk of wildfire spreading into populated areas from wildlands. In addition, on March 1, 2025, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-25-25 to ensure that wildfire-safety projects funded under Assembly Bill 100 benefit from streamlining under the [Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan \(EPP\)](#) created in response to the [Emergency Proclamation issued on March 1, 2025](#). The Governor’s Forest Management Task Force identified these priorities in [California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: A Comprehensive Strategy](#).

The SNC’s role in the Region is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra-Cascade Region, its communities, and the people of California in general. The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is a large-scale restoration program designed to restore the health of California’s primary watershed and create resilient Sierra-Cascade communities. It is recognized by state policy and planning documents as a model program for addressing the growing challenges facing the Sierra-Cascade Region in a changing climate. The [SNC’s 2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#) identifies a Healthy Forests and Watersheds Regional Goal. This goal continues the SNC’s priority focus on healthy forests and broadens efforts to better integrate watershed elements into its programs, reinforcing the SNC’s commitment to preserve, protect, and restore the health of the Region’s watersheds, regardless of the threats they face.

Fires are becoming larger and more damaging and the SNC is taking significant steps to fund “ready projects” that can reduce wildfire risks. California’s Sierra-Cascade Region is home to over 600,000 residents and attracts more than 50 million visitors every year. The Region is the source of more than two-thirds of the state’s water supply, stores half of California’s carbon in its forests, and is home to 60 percent of the state’s animal biodiversity. Investing in the Sierra-Cascade Region provides benefits to all Californians.

This Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program (Program) seeks to create more resilient forest landscapes and watersheds and reduce wildfire risk. The climate and ecological benefits of forest-restoration treatments are well known. Ecologically sound forest management, including prescribed fire, and community protection are critical in securing the overall well-being of the Sierra-Cascade Region. The SNC seeks projects that will reduce wildfire risk to people and communities. The reduced intensity of wildland fire also makes it safer for firefighting resources to utilize fuel breaks to protect structures if a fire enters the wildland urban interface (WUI).

Program Priorities

The primary focus of the Program is protecting people and communities.

[California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan](#) identifies three goals that are strongly aligned with the WIP: healthy and resilient natural places, safe communities, and sustainable economies. Both plans also stress the importance of climate resiliency, Regionally tailored solutions, the linkages between ecological and economic health, the importance of low-intensity fire, and the need to work strategically across land ownership boundaries.

Additionally, the Program aims to support projects that result in a combination of multiple watershed, ecosystem, and community benefits. Examples of such benefits include the reduced likelihood of high-intensity fire and the negative consequences of such fires; protection and enhancement of natural resources, habitat and recreation; improved air and water quality; increased carbon sequestration and reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; and supporting Regional economies.

Funding Source and Requirements

The primary funding source for the Program is Proposition 4 funding appropriated to SNC under AB100. Ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) will be available for this immediate action grant program.

If additional funding sources become available with purposes consistent with SNC’s Strategic Plan, the Forest Management Task Force Action Plan, and the Program, as

described in these guidelines, SNC may allocate those funding sources to the support of this grant program. Project requirements or limitations tied to specific funding sources or state budget allocations will be included in project selection criteria and grant agreements.

Immediate Need

All projects funded under the Program must be ready to proceed immediately upon award, commencing on-the-ground work no later than October 15, 2026. The expectation is that projects will be completed within two years of initiating work on the ground.

The Governor's emergency proclamation issued on March 1, 2025, authorized the secretaries of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to determine which projects are eligible for suspension of certain state of California statutory and regulatory requirements to expedite critical fuels and wildfire risk reduction projects, while at the same time protecting public resources and the environment. This resulted in the creation of the Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan (EPP), which suspends certain state laws and regulations to enable critical wildfire-safety projects to proceed expeditiously, while at the same time protecting public health and the environment. Projects approved under the EPP, or with completed environmental compliance, are eligible for consideration under this Program.

Disadvantaged Communities, Severely Disadvantaged Communities, and Vulnerable Populations

Proposition 4 requires that at least 40 percent of the total funds available shall be allocated for projects that provide meaningful and direct benefits to vulnerable populations or disadvantaged communities. Of this 40 percent, at least 10 percent of the total funds available shall be allocated for projects that provide meaningful and direct benefits to severely disadvantaged communities. The SNC will follow these requirements for awards under the Program.

II. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Applicant Eligibility

Grant funds may be authorized for:

- Public agencies: any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency
- Qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations: “Nonprofit Organization” means a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC
- Eligible Tribal Entities: an Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register; (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe. Eligible tribal entities are encouraged to apply. On September 25, 2020, the Governor released a Statement of Administration Policy on Native American Ancestral Lands to encourage every state agency, department, board, and commission subject to his executive control to seek opportunities to support California tribes’ co-management of and access to natural lands that are within a California tribe’s ancestral land and under the ownership or control of the state of California. The SNC may give favorable consideration to projects that “assist California tribes with procurement, protection, or management of natural lands located within their ancestral territories, subject to available resources.”

Notes:

- The SNC’s governing statute does not allow grants to mutual water companies.
- Tribes should consult with SNC regarding the legal entity applying for and managing grant funds.

Project Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC under this Program, projects must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Have completed environmental compliance, or approval under the EPP

2. Be an implementation project with on-the-ground improvements resulting in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit
3. Be located within the Sierra-Cascade Region as defined by current SNC governing legislation
4. Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the SNC Strategic Plan
5. Be consistent with the requirements of the funding source and budget provisions
6. Commence on-the-ground work no later than October 15, 2026

The primary activities of the project must include at least one of the items below:

- Removal of hazardous, dead, and/or dying trees
- Removal of vegetation for the creation of strategic fuel breaks as identified by approved fire prevention plans, including without limitation, CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans or Community Wildfire Protection Plans
- Removal of vegetation for community defensible space
- Removal of vegetation along roadways, highways, and freeways for the creation of safer ingress and egress routes for the public and responders and/or to reduce roadside ignitions
- Removal of vegetation using cultural traditional ecological knowledge for cultural burning and/or prescribed fire treatments for fuels reduction
- Improvements to previously established fuel breaks or fuels-modification projects

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include:

- Planning projects
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation
- Research, education, outreach, or event-related projects, although these types of activities may be included as a small part of the overall implementation of a project eligible for SNC grant funds
- Fee title/easement acquisitions
- Any projects that do not meet the Program priorities described in these guidelines, such as reforestation and projects that develop wood-utilization infrastructure

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If applicants have questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their [SNC Area Representatives](#).

Eligible Costs

Direct Project Costs

For project costs to be eligible for reimbursement, the costs must be within the scope of the project, supported by appropriate documentation, and completed by the required deadline as identified in the grant agreement. Costs related to project-specific performance measures, project reporting, required signage, and cultural monitoring are eligible costs; they must be included in the project budget if requested by the applicant.

Expenses for California Native American tribes and tribal entities to support their leadership of and participation in project activities, including cultural burning programs implementation activities, and cultural monitoring are eligible costs.

Staff salaries and benefits directly related to project management and project implementation are eligible costs, but hourly rates billed to SNC and specified in the project budget must be equal to the actual compensation paid by the grantee to employees and cannot include administrative costs. Administrative costs must be calculated separately.

Costs for travel and lodging directly related to the project are eligible, but may not exceed the current state lodging, per diem, and mileage reimbursement rates. Food and entertainment are not eligible expenses under this Program. Please note that travel and related costs as part of a subcontract for project implementation are not subject to these limitations.

Administrative (Indirect) Costs

For grants awarded for projects under Proposition 4, SNC will reimburse the grantee's indirect costs. The grantee may request one of the following indirect cost rates:

- The grantee's federal negotiated indirect cost rate, pursuant to its Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA).
- The 15 percent de minimis indirect cost rate specified in Part 200 of Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
- A rate negotiated by the grantee with another state agency within the last five years.
- A rate proposed by the grantee in the grantee's program application with the administering state agency if the grantee does not have an existing state rate.

In the event of an audit, projects with budgets that include administrative costs must be able to document the appropriateness of these expenses. If applicant does not have an existing NICRA, a typical method for documentation of administrative overhead expenses is a Cost Allocation Plan (CAP). A CAP is a formal accounting plan used to calculate and document the method for recovering overhead costs. The SNC strongly recommends that

grantees consult with an accounting professional to develop an appropriate method for calculating overhead rate and prepare a CAP.

Ineligible Costs

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing or increasing a legal defense fund or endowment
- Monetary donations to other organizations
- Food or refreshments not part of a negotiated subcontract related to project implementation
- Costs associated with fundraising
- Grant writing expenses
- Any expenses incurred before a grant agreement is executed or after the project completion deadline, as identified in the grant agreement

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Right of Access

If the applicant does not own the property on which the project is implemented, proposals must include letters from all property owners/managers indicating their awareness of and willingness to implement the project. Before a grant agreement is executed, the applicant must enter into a land tenure agreement with the landowner assuring access for project implementation, 10 years of maintenance after project completion, and 25 years of SNC monitoring after project completion. The land tenure agreement between the applicant and the landowner must be executed within 30 days of award of a grant by the SNC.

Implementation projects may be subject to monitoring for general site conditions. The SNC and its officers, employees, agents, and representatives shall have access to monitor the project site for 25 years following completion of the project. This requirement will be addressed through the grant agreement with the grantee; the SNC will not enter into a separate agreement with private landowners. The SNC will coordinate with the grantee whenever possible when requesting access.

Environmental Compliance Documents

At the time of proposal submission, SNC requires all projects comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), or have documentation that CNRA and CalEPA have determined the project is eligible to proceed under the [EPP](#). Since the complexity of CEQA compliance will vary depending on the proposed project activities and the type of applicant, it is very important that applicants consult with SNC staff as early as possible to discuss which CEQA documents will be required.

If the project is subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a NEPA decision must be in effect at the time the proposal is submitted.

NOTE: When projects have previously completed CEQA or NEPA documentation and the baseline environmental conditions of the project area have significantly changed (due to fire, tree mortality, etc.), applicants must provide confirmation from the agency responsible for preparing the original environmental compliance documents that the analysis and determinations remain valid.

Long-Term Management

Projects receiving support through this Program must demonstrate a clear and enduring public benefit. All project sites shall be maintained, operated, and used in a manner consistent with the purposes of the project for 10 years after project completion. Additionally, the grantee and/or property owner shall not use any portion of the project site for mitigation or as security for any debt. The long-term management plan must include a description of how project deliverables will be managed and maintained over time, by whom, and how funding will be provided for such work.

Performance Measures, Activity Tracking, and Reporting

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to the SNC achieving its programmatic goals. Detailed information and recommended performance measures can be found on the [SNC Performance Measures](#) webpage.

The SNC requires all grantees consider four specific quantitative performance measures:

1. Number and type of jobs created
2. Number and value of new, improved, or preserved economic activities
3. Resources leveraged for the Sierra-Cascade Region
4. Number of people reached

In addition, each grantee will be required to report on one to three additional project-specific performance measures that will help describe project outcomes in a measurable way. Examples of additional performance measures can be found on the SNC Performance Measures webpage.

Applicants may also propose alternative performance measures, which will be subject to the approval of SNC staff if the grant is authorized. The proposed measures will be finalized in consultation with SNC staff prior to grant agreement approval.

All grantees will be required to track progress of acres and types of vegetation treatments; this tracking will be included in the six-month progress reports. Grantees will be required to provide geospatial files of treatment locations before a grant agreement is signed, and at project completion.

All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline. The final report must include data associated with the project's performance measures.

Engagement with California Native American Tribes

Recognizing that Native Americans have inhabited and cared for the land of present-day California since time immemorial, the SNC strongly encourages engagement with Native American tribes as early as possible in the development, planning, and implementation of projects. The SNC staff can assist project proponents with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area and provide contact information for those tribes. The SNC will notify the appropriate tribal contacts regarding all eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area. The SNC may prioritize projects in which tribal representatives or communities are actively involved in project development. Please refer to [SNC's Tribal Relations Policy](#) for additional information.

California Conservation Corps and Certified Community Conservation Corps

Proposition 4, as codified in Public Resources Code § 90150, states: "To the extent feasible, a project whose application includes the use of services of the California Conservation Corps or Certified Community Conservation Corps, as defined in Section 14507.5, shall be given preference for receipt of a grant under this division."

Applicants shall be given preference, in the form of additional scoring points, if their project includes the use of the services of the California Conservation Corps or Certified Community Conservation Corps (hereafter collectively referred to as Corps).

If you would like to receive preference by including the use of the Corps in your application, submit your project details via the [California Conservation Corps webpage](#). The Corps will review the project application for feasibility within 14 business days and respond with evidence of consultation to include in the application.

The Corps cannot guarantee a compliant review process for applicants who submit the required form and attachments fewer than 14 business days before an application deadline.

Cooperation with Local Agencies

In compliance with the SNC's governing statute, local government agencies, such as counties, cities, and local water districts, are notified of eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

For all proposals under consideration, SNC staff will notify the county and/or city and public water agency affected (when appropriate), and request comments within one

month of notification. The SNC will make all reasonable efforts to address concerns raised by local governments.

If there are privacy concerns related to information contained in a proposal, please notify SNC staff before submission.

Registered Professional Foresters

In compliance with the [Professional Foresters Law](#) (Pub. Resources Code, Sections 750-753, et seq.), projects that directly impact the management and treatment of the forest resources and timberlands of this state are required to use Registered Professional Foresters. Projects implemented on federally managed lands will be permitted to use “qualified but exempt” federal staff to satisfy this requirement.

Additional Requirements

Any additional requirements or restrictions, including those specific to additional funding sources or new state budget requirements, will be included in updated Program guidance documents.

IV. PROGRAM PROCESS

Proposal Development

As the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program is a directed grant program, proposals are developed in conjunction with the SNC. To initiate consideration of a project, an applicant must submit a Statement of Interest, which briefly summarizes the project concept. The Statement of Interest form and submission instructions can be found on the [SNC Grants webpage](#). The SNC has dedicated [Area Representatives](#) for each county in [the service area](#). Applicants may contact the appropriate Area Representative to discuss project concepts.

After submission of a Statement of Interest, a site visit may be conducted. The purpose of the Statement of Interest and site visit is to provide the applicant an opportunity to clarify any questions that may assist with proposal development. If the applicant is not a tribal entity and does not already have tribal representation on its team, the applicant is encouraged to invite tribal representatives who have been contacted through outreach efforts to participate in this site visit.

If it is determined that the SNC will consider partnering on the project, the applicant will be asked to submit a proposal. The SNC will share the proposal form with the applicant and assist in developing the project.

Schedule

Proposals will be accepted and reviewed on a continuous basis until January 31, 2026, or as long as funding is available. Recommendations may be made to the SNC Governing Board on a quarterly basis.

Evaluation Process

1. The project proposal will be reviewed by an environmental compliance expert.
2. Proposals will be shared with appropriate county/city planning, water agency, tribal representatives, and SNC Board Subregional representatives. If there are any privacy concerns related to information in the proposal, please discuss them with SNC staff before submission.
3. The SNC evaluation team will independently review and meet to discuss the proposals based on the evaluation criteria described in the following section.
4. The evaluation team will prepare a recommendation for SNC's executive team.

5. After the evaluation process is complete, including all due diligence and analysis by the SNC, funding recommendation(s) will be placed on a future Board meeting agenda at the discretion of SNC's executive officer.

Special Considerations

Consistent with provisions of the Program funding and objectives of the proposed project, the SNC may give favorable consideration to projects which:

- Involve California Native American tribes, including grants directly to tribal entities or those to tribal or other entities that provide meaningful engagement with and support to tribal partners
- Were developed under the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program
- Directly benefit severely disadvantaged communities, disadvantaged communities, or vulnerable populations
- Engage a workforce-development effort, including, but not limited to, tribal workforce programs, California Conservation Corps, or other training programs
- Enable the equitable geographic distribution of SNC resources

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation team will score the proposals based on the evaluation criteria described below. Proposals scoring 80 or more points may be eligible for a recommendation for award:

#1 Public and Natural Resource Benefits, and Alignment with Funding and Program Goals (30)

The degree to which the project aligns with funding program goals, improves wildfire resilience, addresses immediate needs, and results in multiple, tangible benefits. How strong is the need for the specific project? How critical are the public benefit outcomes?

#2 Project Design and Budget (20)

Clarity on the project purpose, goals, deliverables, treatment approach, schedule, and budget. Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project and adequately described to ensure methods and technologies are understood? Are the proposed deliverables appropriate for the project? Is the budget adequate and reasonable to implement the project, with costs clearly defined and supported?

#3 Likelihood of Success (15)

Can the project meet funding expenditure expectations? Is all funding identified or secured? Does the project organizer and any identified project partner(s) have the necessary experience and sufficient capacity to implement the project as described? Has

the project team successfully completed projects of similar complexity, scale, and budget?

#4 Long-Term Management (10)

Is the plan, funding, and the responsible entity in place for carrying out long-term management? How will public benefits be sustained?

#5 Community and Tribal Support and Collaboration (10)

The degree to which the project has public and institutional support at the local, regional, or larger scale and the local community or other stakeholders are engaged in project planning or delivery. Was the project developed as part of collaborative? Is there clear and demonstrable community outreach and support for the project and any community economic benefits? Is there tribal leadership or participation in the project? If the applicant is not a tribal entity, is there evidence of this support? Is there evidence of local government support?

#6 Landscape Context (10)

The degree to which the proposed project is part of a larger plan or coordinated effort. Does the project support a broader, cumulative effort to restore/protect strategic goals?

#7 Leveraging (5)

The degree to which a project provides in-kind services and/or secured federal, state, private, or local cost share funding. Have non-monetary and/or funding resources of agencies and organizations other than the SNC been identified and secured?

#8 California or Certified Community Conservation Corps (5)

The degree to which a project utilizes the California or Certified Community Conservation Corps.

Grant Awards and Agreements

For each awarded grant, the SNC develops an individual grant agreement with detailed provisions and requirements specific to that project. Please be aware that if an entity is awarded a grant from the SNC, the provisions listed below will apply:

- Grant-eligible costs may be incurred by the grantee only after the grantee has entered into a fully executed agreement with the SNC.
- All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline.

- To the extent practicable, projects will be required to include onsite signage indicating that the project was funded by the SNC under Proposition 4. The required acknowledgement language is included in the grant agreement. Reasonable costs associated with creation and installation of the sign are eligible expenses and should be included in the project budget.
- The SNC's standard grant agreement includes language that incorporates a limited waiver of a grantee's sovereign immunity related only to the purposes of the grant agreement, as the grant is governed by and shall be interpreted in accordance with the laws of the state of California. If this is a point of concern, the applicant should contact the SNC for further discussion.

The SNC will provide assistance to the grantee to ensure the grantee's clear understanding and interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grant.

V. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAP	Cost Allocation Plan
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CNRA	California Natural Resources Agency
CalEPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
DAC	Disadvantaged Community
EPP	2025 Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NICRA	Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
PRC	Public Resources Code
Program	Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program
Proposition 4	2024 Proposition 4 Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Act
SDAC	Severely Disadvantaged Community
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
WIP	Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface

VI. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Unless otherwise stated, the terms used in these grant guidelines shall have the following meanings:

Administrative Costs – Administrative costs, also called indirect costs, include any expense which is not directly related to project implementation. Similar to the traditional definition of “overhead,” administrative costs include shared costs, such as rent, utilities, travel, per diem, office equipment, services such as internet and phone, shared bookkeeping costs, etc.

Applicant – The entity applying for a SNC grant pursuant to these guidelines.

Board – The governing body of the SNC as established by PRC Section 33321.

CEQA – The California Environmental Quality Act as set forth in the PRC Section 21000 et seq. The CEQA is a law establishing policies and procedures that require agencies to identify, disclose to decision makers and the public, and attempt to lessen significant impacts to environmental and historical resources that may occur as a result of a proposed project to be undertaken, funded, or approved by a local or state agency.

CEQA/NEPA Compliance – Activities an entity performs to meet the requirements of CEQA and/or NEPA.

Collaborative Process – Cooperation between stakeholders with different interests to solve a problem or make decisions that cut across jurisdictional or other boundaries; often used when information is widely dispersed, and no single individual, agency, or group has sufficient resources to address the issue alone.

Design – Preliminary project planning or identification of methodologies or processes to achieve project goals.

Disadvantaged Community (DAC) – a community with a median household income of less than 80 percent of the area average or less than 80 percent of statewide median household income.

Eligible Costs – Expenses incurred by the grantee during the performance period of an approved agreement, which may be reimbursed by the SNC.

Enhancement – Modification of a site to increase/improve the condition of streams, forests, habitat, and other resources.

Executive Officer – Executive Officer of the SNC appointed by the Governing Board, pursuant to PRC Section 33328, to manage the SNC.

Fee Title – The primary interest in land ownership that entitles the owner to use the property subject to any lesser interests in the land and consistent with applicable laws and ordinances.

Forest Health – A healthy forest is a forest that possesses the ability to sustain the unique species composition and processes that exist within it. Forest health occurs when resilience, recurrence, persistence, and biophysical processes lead to sustainable ecological conditions.

Grant – Funds made available to a grantee for eligible costs during an agreement term.

Grant Agreement – An agreement between the SNC and the grantee specifying the payment of funds by the SNC for the performance of the project scope according to the terms of the agreement by the grantee.

Grantee – An entity that has an agreement with the SNC for grant funds.

Grant / Project Scope – Description of the items of work to be completed with grant funds as described in the application form and cost estimate.

In-kind Contributions – Non-monetary donations that are utilized on the project, within the project scope and timeframe, including materials and services. These donations shall be eligible as “other sources of funds” when providing budgetary information for application purposes.

Land Tenure – Legal ownership or other rights in land, sufficient to allow a grantee to conduct activities that are necessary for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. Examples include fee title ownership, an easement for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement, or agreements or a clearly defined process where the applicant has adequate site control for the purposes of the project.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) – A legal agreement of the indirect cost rate negotiated between the Federal Government and an organization that reflects the indirect costs (facilities and administrative costs) and fringe benefit expenses incurred by the organization under a grant. In the absence of a NICRA, the grantee can use the de minimis rate of 15 percent of modified total direct costs.

NEPA – [The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969](https://ceq.doe.gov/), as amended. NEPA (<https://ceq.doe.gov/>) is a federal law requiring consideration of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project whenever a federal agency has discretionary jurisdiction over some aspect of that project.

Nonprofit Organization – A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable

purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in Pub. Resources Code Section 33302, subd. (e).

Performance Measure – A [quantitative measure](#) used by the SNC to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes.

Permitting – The process of obtaining any necessary regulatory approvals from appropriate governmental agencies to implement the project.

Project – The work to be accomplished with grant funds.

Proposal – The individual grant application form and its required attachments pursuant to the SNC grant program.

Public Agencies – Any city, county, district, joint powers authority, or state agency.

Region – The Sierra Nevada Region as defined in PRC Section 33302 (f).

Resilience – The ability of an ecosystem to regain structural and functional attributes that have suffered harm from stress or disturbance.

Region-wide – The overall breadth of the SNC Region or multiple Subregions within the Region.

Restoration – Activities that initiate, accelerate, or return the components and processes of a damaged site to previous historical ecological site conditions.

Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) – A community with a median household income of less than 60 percent of the area average or less than 60 percent of statewide median household income.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) – The Sierra Nevada Conservancy as defined in PRC Section 33302 (b).

Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan – The Environmental Protection Plan (EPP) developed to fulfill Governor Newsom’s State of Emergency Proclamation signed on March 1, 2025, seeking to expedite fuels-reduction projects that protect communities and reduce severe risks of catastrophic wildfire. This EPP enables critical wildfire safety projects to proceed expeditiously while protecting public health and the environment. It does so by identifying the protective measures that will be followed by projects that have received suspension from state permitting requirements.

Tribal Entities – Includes any Native American tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following:
(1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal

Register. (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe.

Vulnerable Population - A subgroup population within a region or community that faces a disproportionately heightened risk or increased sensitivity to impacts of climate change and that lacks adequate resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from the changes.

Agenda Item 11: State Water Project Headwaters Investment Pilot

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and the Department of Water Resources (DWR) have been meeting about the possibility of partnering to direct funding for the protection and restoration of the Upper Feather River Watershed (Upper Feather). The Upper Feather is located in the northern part of the SNC Region, spanning parts of Plumas, Butte, Sierra, and Lassen counties. This watershed [is a major source of the state's water supply](#), most notably serving as the headwaters for the [California State Water Project \(SWP\)](#). The SWP is the nation's largest state-owned, user-financed water and power system, delivering water to 27 million Californians, irrigating 750,000 acres of farmland, and generating hydroelectricity to support California's energy grid.

In addition to its role as a critical water supply for the state, the Upper Feather is a biodiversity hotspot, rich in cultural history, and home to several Sierra Nevada tribes and many small communities. However, the watershed has faced significant challenges in recent years. Since 2018, over 1.3 million acres (approximately 57 percent) of the Upper Feather have burned in multiple wildfires, including the 2018 Camp Fire (153,336 acres), the 2020 North Complex Fire (318,935 acres), and the 2021 Dixie Fire (963,309 acres). These "megafires" have been particularly devastating with approximately 50 percent of the acreage affected by high-severity fire.

The aftermath of these fires has severely impacted the Upper Feather. Loss of canopy vegetation and changes to soil properties can result in increased flooding, erosion, increased temperatures, and the delivery of sediment, ash, pollutants, and debris to surface water. The timing of runoff and snowpack retention patterns also become less predictable. These watershed-level changes affect local communities, habitats, ecosystem function, and water supply and quality.

Water managers recognize that the frequency and severity of wildfires are increasing due to fuels build-up from a century of fire suppression efforts and are exacerbated by climate change. In response, DWR has committed to supporting forest restoration in the Upper Feather. This project aims to speed up activities for fuels management, wildfire-risk reduction, and forest restoration, focusing on a pilot area adjacent to Lake Almanor within the boundaries of the 168,889-acre [North Fork Forest Recovery Project](#).

The DWR is not the only water interest investing in the Feather River watershed. The [Metropolitan Water District of Southern California \(MWD\)](#) is providing \$400,000 to fund three forest-restoration projects within the headwaters of the SWP, which supplies one-third of Southern California's water. Like the [Yuba Water Agency's investment](#) in the [North Yuba Forest Project](#), there is a growing appreciation by water managers that the resilience of headwater forests is a critical part of protecting California's water supply.

Current Status

As of the writing of this report, SNC staff is collaborating with DWR to develop a scope of work for Upper Feather restoration and resilience activities. The DWR intends to invest \$400,000 between 2025 and 2027, with funding released in three installments. The DWR does not possess grantmaking authority for SWP funds and is therefore seeking a partner with established relationships and a comprehensive understanding of headwater stakeholders and restoration priorities, making the partnership with the SNC both strategic and necessary. Objectives of the DWR are to support efforts that will likely include:

- Reducing wildfire risk and improving forest resilience: This will include hand and mechanical thinning, prescribed fire, and other activities to decrease fuels and improve forest resilience to drought and wildfire.
- Controlling invasive species: Efforts will be made to manage non-native plant species that threaten forest health and watershed quality.
- Reforesting high-severity burn areas: Areas where natural regeneration is unlikely will be revegetated to restore forest conditions.
- Improving hydrologic functioning: Projects will focus on restoring the natural hydrological and biological functions of meadows and stream systems.

The SNC will retain 10 percent of the funding to cover administrative and indirect costs. The SNC's responsibilities include:

- Coordinating with partners to ensure project deliverables are met.
- Providing communication services, including social media posts, Spotlight features, and videos.
- Managing the grant(s), including organizing field tours, troubleshooting, reviewing invoices and reports, and serving as the liaison between partners.

Staff requests that the Board delegate authority to the executive officer to accept the funding from DWR and to enter into grants and/or contracts to distribute the funding. The SNC staff will also meet outreach and communication requirements for tribes, local governments, and water agencies before executing any grants under this authority. Any grants requiring CEQA environmental review and documentation beyond an Exemption from CEQA will be brought to the Board for approval.

Next Steps

Staff of the SNC will continue to work towards finalizing both an interagency agreement and grant agreement(s) to secure the partnership and funding. However, given the unprecedented nature of this partnership and uncertainties around federal staffing and funding, there is a possibility that this initiative may face challenges in moving forward as planned. The SNC will keep the Board apprised of this project.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board:

- 1. Authorize the SNC executive officer to accept the funds from DWR; and**
- 2. Delegate authority to the executive officer to approve and execute grants and/or contracts consistent with the project objectives and qualifying for an Exemption from CEQA for expenditure of DWR funds; and**
- 3. Report all new grants approved to the Board.**

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Agenda Item 12: Action Plan Update

Background

On a recurring cycle, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board approves a five-year strategic plan identifying broad goals for SNC staff to advance through executive leadership, programs, policies, outreach, and administration. Over 18 months, SNC staff prepared the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, using a development process that allowed time for SNC staff, Boardmembers, external partners, community groups, tribes, and other interested public to offer feedback. Public comment received was considered and incorporated where feasible into the final draft of the Strategic Plan, and the Board approved the final [2024-2029 Strategic Plan](#) in June 2024.

As a companion to each Strategic Plan, SNC staff prepare annual action plans that identify the primary activities necessary to move the Strategic Plan work forward over the coming year. Each action plan is designed to be flexible and enable staff to respond to emerging issues. The [2024-2025 Annual Action Plan](#) was approved by the Board in June 2024.

Report Out on Major Achievements in 2024-2025

The 2024-2025 Annual Action Plan identifies actions related to SNC's four Regional 2024-2029 Strategic Plan Goals: healthy forests and watersheds; resilient Sierra-Cascade communities; sustainable recreation, tourism, and equitable outdoor access; and conservation and stewardship of natural and working lands.

Over the last year, California's administration and the legislature invested record amounts of funding to reduce wildfire risk and protect communities, support conservation and stewardship efforts that advance the state's 30x30 initiative, and expand recreational and outdoor access for all. With this has come increased collaboration across state, federal, and Regional partners to build capacity, remove barriers that slow progress, and advance opportunities to work at a landscape-level. Similarly, watershed health, biodiversity, cultural values, recreation, and resilient rural economies have also seen an increase in state investment.

Staff continues the considerable workload of managing grants and monitoring project outcomes into the coming years. The 2024 Climate Bond offers new opportunities for the SNC to disburse funding into the Region. The SNC will continue to amplify Regional needs, educate policy- and decision-makers on the importance of Sierra-Cascade watersheds, and use its unique staff structure and talent to directly participate in local collaboratives, offer technical assistance and funding support, understand the science, review policy, create tools, and innovate, all to apply and bring support into the SNC Region.

FY 2024-25 Progress

In the interest of brevity, the language of some actions has been condensed.

Healthy Forest and Watersheds

- a.) Action: Continue the management of active subgrants awarded via the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) and provide status updates to the Board.
 - Progress: In 2024-25 staff closed out the SNC's first two RFFCP block grants - an investment of approximately \$9 million in Regional partners.
- b.) Action: Award and administer the next round of RFFCP subgrants, including the launch of a tribal capacity building pilot program.
 - Progress: The SNC awarded 24 subgrants for critical capacity building and project pipeline development activities – an investment of approximately \$8.6 million in Regional partners.
 - Progress: The SNC launched the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program and selected 12 tribes and tribal organizations to participate in group trainings, workshops, peer learning sessions, one-on-one support, and technical assistance – an investment of approximately \$1.5 million in tribal partners.
- c.) Action: Support the success of the Department of Conservation's (DOC) RFFCP efforts; demonstrate SNC's effectiveness as a Regional implementor and track the potential for additional funding opportunities should RFFCP receive future funding.
 - Progress: Staff published and shared 15 Sierra Spotlight blog posts on RFFCP-sponsored activities. The DOC received an additional \$185 million for the RFFCP in the Climate Bond due to the success of the program statewide.
- d.) Action: Share lessons learned from the Landscape Investment Strategy (LIS), and Landscape Grant Pilot Program (LGPP), with interested partner agencies to set foundation for future funding alignment efforts.
 - Progress: Staff documented LGPP lessons learned and met with CNRA, CAL FIRE, USFS, DOC, and others to discuss potential solutions to challenges.
 - Progress: Staff reviewed and updated the "Ready Landscapes Criteria" used to identify investment-ready landscapes for the LGPP and re-evaluated partnerships working in the Region. Fifteen landscapes have been identified as investment-ready—up from six originally—with another landscape that should be investment-ready within a year. Seventeen more collaborative groups are in early stages of development and/or assessment, most of which are receiving RFFCP funding.
 - Progress: Staff supported the initial LGPP grantee, the Healthy Eldorado Landscape Partnership (HELP), through ongoing engagement, workgroups, and tools.
- e.) Action: Continue developing the Regional Priority Plan (RPP), recognizing that the project crosses over with other actions related to RFFCP and LIS work.

- Progress: Staff constructed a beta version of the RPP in ArcGIS Online and are compiling the information needed from partners. Updates from the RPP are ongoing.
- f.) Action: Participate in a post-fire landscape reforestation pilot effort.
 - Progress: Staff participated in the post-fire work group; however, the continuation of this pilot is uncertain due to federal partnership concerns.
- g.) Action: Manage existing reimbursement and grant work.
 - Progress: Staff closed out 12 grants totaling \$6 million. The closeout of a \$10.7 million CAL FIRE California Climate Investments grant is anticipated by June 30.
 - Progress: Staff managed approximately 100 active grants totaling \$135 million and completed 35 monitoring site visits.
 - Progress: Staff managed the first large landscape grant to HELP.
- h.) Action: Engage in policy and funding conversations to position SNC for future appropriations through the state budget process and seek out other reimbursement opportunities.
 - Progress: The SNC was included for \$81.5 million in funding from the November 2024 voter-approved Climate Bond. An additional \$42.5 million was allocated to SNC, with about half planned for appropriation in 2025-26.
 - Progress: The SNC compiled information from all 10 conservancies and the Wildlife Conservation Board on conservancy contributions towards California's Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets, shared this data with CNRA, and engaged in discussions on how sustained baseline funding for conservancy programs would help the state achieve identified climate goals.
- i.) Action: Provide technical assistance to, and continue participation in, collaborative workgroups to support community-scale biomass utilization and wood-processing opportunities.
 - Progress: Staff managed active wood processing projects, including three sawmills, three bioenergy facilities, and many feedstock projects.
 - Progress: Staff advanced conversations on a potential partnership with the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to invest in forest health and wildfire risk reduction projects in the Upper Feather River watershed.

Resilient Sierra-Cascade Communities

- a) Action: Deepen relationships, build new partnerships, and expand understanding about the social and economic challenges facing the Region.
 - Progress: The SNC's regional scientist contributed to the development of the Sierra Nevada Communities section of [California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment](#).

- Progress: The SNC's regional scientist was involved in the development of and discussions around data metrics for the TCSI project tracker that captures the unique climate and socio-economic risks in Sierra-Cascade communities.
- b) Action: Review/assess SNC's current performance measures and other metrics it could use for storytelling and identify relevant socio-economic data.
 - Progress: Staff tracked and updated the metrics developed for the 2023 20-year Impact Report and began assessing options to improve current performance measures and metric tracking systems.
- c) Action: Manage existing reimbursement and grant work.
 - Progress: Staff managed one active grant totaling \$355,000.
- d) Action: Track the efforts of, and participate in, the Jobs First collaborative groups.
 - Progress: Staff engaged in efforts in the four Jobs First regions that overlap with the SNC Region and continue to track priority local projects and Regional strategies that may align with SNC's mission.
- e) Action: Engage in policy and funding conversations to position the SNC for future appropriations and seek out other reimbursement opportunities.
 - Progress: The SNC developed a proposal for CNRA for a regional block grant of up to \$10 million in unallocated Climate Bond funds to leverage and advance community protection projects and implement fuel reduction, structure hardening, and defensible space projects on tribal land.
 - Progress: The SNC collaborated with the other conservancies on a strategy for long-term, sustained funding to support the implementation of nature-based climate solutions. (See details under the Healthy Forests and Watersheds, item h.)

Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access

- a. Action: Provide technical assistance and support by holding grant-writing workshops and project-funding consultations.
 - Progress: Staff provided grant administration and writing workshops almost every month, as well as individual project funding consultations.
- b. Action: Participate in Regional and statewide recreational collaboratives to inform policy and foster Regional support.
 - Progress: The SNC participated in the Sustainable & Accessible Recreation Key Working Group, which developed a [Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation & Wildfire Resilience](#).
- c. Action: Manage existing reimbursement and grant work.
 - Progress: Staff closed out three grants totaling \$641,000.
 - Progress: Staff managed 22 active grants totaling \$8 million.

- d. Action: Engage in policy and funding conversations to position the SNC for future appropriations and seek out other reimbursement opportunities.
 - Progress: The SNC developed a proposal for CNRA for up to \$50 million in unallocated Outdoor Access Climate Bond funds to restore recreation infrastructure impacted by wildfire; improve ADA accessibility at public recreation sites; facilitate acquisitions and easements that increase access to parks and open space, specifically for tribes; complete infrastructure enhancements to protect natural landscapes from recreation overuse; and expand programs that connect disadvantaged communities with nature. Unallocated funding decisions are still pending.
 - Progress: The SNC collaborated with the other conservancies on a strategy for long-term, sustained funding to support the implementation of nature-based climate solutions. (See details under the Healthy Forests and Watersheds, item h.)

Conservation and Stewardship of Natural and Working Lands

- a. Action: Provide technical assistance and support to partners, such as holding grant-writing workshops and project-funding consultations.
 - Progress: Staff provided grant administration and writing workshops almost every month, as well as individual project funding consultations.
- b. Action: Build relationships with state policymakers and funding agencies to inform on Regional needs and projects that advance the State's 30x30 goal and other strategic priorities.
 - Progress: The SNC's staff met with legislative staff and members from key senate and assembly offices and budget and policy committees to educate them about SNC's work and projects.
 - Progress: The SNC's staff attended and participated as panelists in Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force meetings.
 - Progress: The SNC published Sierra Spotlight articles on SNC-funded conservation and stewardship projects and produced a slide show for the CNRA media wall on SNC-funded land conservation projects.
- c. Action: Participate in the development of the state's tribal co-management and land-back strategy to ensure Regional needs and issues are adequately addressed.
 - Progress: The SNC launched the RFFCP Tribal Capacity Building Program to support 12 tribes that are reclaiming essential stewardship roles.
 - Progress: Staff participated in a workgroup of CNRA tribal liaisons to identify and overcome barriers to getting grant and contract funding to tribes.
- d. Action: Connect to conservation and stewardship objectives through the launch of the Tribal Empowerment and Mentoring pilot program, within the RFFCP.
 - Progress: See progress descriptions in item c. above.

- e. Action: Manage existing reimbursement and grant work.
 - Progress: Staff closed out four grants totaling \$1 million.
 - Progress: Staff managed five active grants totaling \$2.3 million.
- f. Action: Engage in policy and funding conversations to position the SNC for future appropriations and seek out other reimbursement opportunities.
 - Progress: The SNC is collaborating with the other conservancies on a strategy for long-term, sustained funding to support the implementation of nature-based solutions. (See details under the Healthy Forests and Watersheds, item h.)

Organizational Goals

In 2024-25, SNC's organizational goals looked to strengthen and develop programs and practices that build and expand funding, capacity, understanding, culture, and equity, both internally and externally, to set a strong foundation for delivering quality work into the Region. Achievements include:

- Making Board meetings more accessible by providing live video streaming.
- Publishing dozens of Sierra Spotlight posts to educate policymakers, advocates, and the public on SNC efforts and achievements in projects, science, and research
- Continuing the practice of bringing people into the SNC Region through SNC-hosted tours and speaking at other educational events in-Region.
- Continuing to grow the Tribal Program by supporting the Tribal Engagement Workgroup, providing feedback to the [CNRA Consultation policy](#), considering how to best fund and support federally non-recognized tribes without NGOs, and participating in development of potential legislation to improve state tribal support.
- Developing and using tools to improve efficiency and communications internally across the entire department.
- Supporting staff growth and job satisfaction through rebranding and build-out of the Learning & Development Program.
- Providing support and focus on SNC's Executive Advisory committees and internal working groups, including the Justice, Equity, Diversity & Equity Committee (JEDI), the Disability Awareness Committee (DAC), and Tribal Engagement, plus staff participation in monthly CNRA Equity and Environmental Justice workgroup meetings.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to implement the 2024-2025 Action Plan and prepare the next Action Plan for presentation at a future 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 5, 2025

Executive Officer Authorized Grant Agreement Amendments and Grant Awards

Grant Agreement Amendments

Pursuant to the Delegation of Authority approved by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board in June of 2022, the executive officer has the authority to:

- amend and modify the terms of any grant previously authorized by the SNC Board, in order to carry out the purposes of the Board authorization for such grant, including minor changes to scope or deliverables, and including increases in grant awards of up to 10 percent; provided, that funds are available, within the budgeted appropriation, to cover any such increase; and provided further, that the original stated purpose of the grant meets the original intent of the program from which it was funded; and provided further, that the SNC Board shall be notified upon modification of such grant and the modification shall be reported at the following SNC Board meeting.
- amend and modify the terms, including substantive changes to scope, deliverables, and/or purpose of such a grant, including increases in grant awards up to 10 percent, when a change in condition or change in need arises due to an emergency; provided, that the nature of the emergency requires an amendment to be made before the following SNC Board meeting; and provided further, that funds are available within the budgeted appropriation to cover any such increase; and provided further, that the SNC Board shall be notified upon modification of such grant and such modification shall be reported at the following SNC Board meeting. “Emergency,” as used in this provision, means a sudden, unexpected occurrence involving a clear and imminent danger, demanding immediate action to prevent or mitigate loss of or damage to life, health, property, or essential public services, and includes such occurrences as fire, flood, earthquake, or other soil or geologic movements, as well as such occurrences as riot, accident, or sabotage.

Between February 1, 2025, and April 30, 2025, the executive officer approved and executed five SNC grant project amendments under this Delegation of Authority. If amendment activities might be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an analysis was completed to determine if the project was exempt from CEQA, and Notices of Exemption were filed.

Amendments Executed Between February 1, 2025, and April 30, 2025

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Amendment Purpose
1341.3	Big Chico Creek Forest Resilience Project	Butte County Fire Safe Council	Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Augmentation of \$63,000 (approved by SNC in December 2024) utilizing remaining funds from the FY 2020-2021 General Fund (\$36,964.33) and FY 2021-2022 General Fund (\$26,035.67). • Amendment included treatment of 14 additional acres. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed.
1312.3	Concow Resilience Project: Implementation	Butte County Resource Conservation District	Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the Advance clause of the Grant Agreement to partially waive the retention for this project, allowing the grantee to request their 4th advance. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1149.3	TCSI Project Lead and Conservancy Engagement	California Tahoe Conservancy	Multiple (TCSI area ranges across parts of 8 different counties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended the project completion date to January 1, 2027; associated shifts within the project timeline and deliverables; a budget adjustment; and updated reporting requirements. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1549.2	Marian Creek Fire Recovery Project	Feather River Resource Conservation District	Plumas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the Project Budget by renaming the Tribal Participation/Monitoring line item to Tribal Workforce Training, which allowed these funds to be shifted towards providing training stipends for tribal members to attend TREX prescribed fire training workshops. • No additional funding required. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed.

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Amendment Purpose
1522.1	Giant Sequoia Resilience Coordination Project	Plumas Corporation	Fresno, Tulare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revised the project scope, two project deliverables and adjusted the project budget by \$150,000 between two project budget categories.• No additional funding required.• Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.

Grant Awards

Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP)

At the December 9, 2022, Board meeting, the SNC Governing Board granted the executive officer authority to enter into funding agreements with the California Department of Conservation to administer funds for the purposes of the RFFCP, provided that all grants authorized under this delegated authority meet the following criteria: 1) align with all RFFCP requirements; 2) meet the goals and objectives of the Watershed Improvement Program; and 3) be reported at regularly scheduled Board meetings. The SNC is distributing this funding directly to partners through subgrants and by providing Region-wide technical assistance. Further, as was presented by SNC staff to the Board, “Any grants requiring CEQA environmental review and documentation beyond a categorical exemption would be brought to the Board for authorization.” (December 9, 2022, Board Meeting, Staff Report, Agenda Item 12: Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Grant.)

Between February 1, 2025 and April 30, 2025, there were no grant awards made under the RFFCP.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Key Meetings and Presentations

March – May 2025

March 27 & 28: Spring Regional Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force)

Meeting: Executive Officer Angie Avery attended this quarterly convening of the Task Force held in San Rafael, in Marin County. On March 7, panel discussions were held on a range of topics including lessons from the LA fires, building resilient communities, tools for improving community resilience, and expanding career pathways in fire and forestry. On March 8, there were several field tour opportunities available for participants. The meeting agenda and recording can be found in the archives section of the [Task Force Meetings webpage](#).

April 4: CNRA Beneficial Fire Roundtable: More than 90 attendees from state and federal agencies, tribes, academia, air districts, and beneficial fire practitioners participated in this roundtable discussion hosted by CNRA. Participants reflected on accomplishments, ongoing barriers, and potential solutions to expanding the use of beneficial fire. The outcomes of the discussion are helping to inform the development of a set of recommendations to the governor required by the [Governor's State of Emergency Proclamation issued on March 1, 2025](#). Executive Officer Angie Avery and Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich attended this event.

April 7: CNRA Deputy Secretaries and Conservancies/WCB Round Table: The SNC co-hosted this invitation-only event in Sacramento to provide a forum for CNRA leadership to learn more about the work the 10 state conservancies and the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) do to advance various state goals. There was an opportunity for open dialogue about program priorities and needs. Executive Officer Angie Avery, Deputy Executive Officer Amy Lussier, Field & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky, and Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich attended this event.

April 8: Sierra Day at the Capitol: Field & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky attended and spoke during the morning gathering at the CNRA building in Sacramento. The event convenes advocates and partners to bring awareness to Sacramento decision-makers regarding the policy priorities and issues that affect the Sierra Nevada region.

April 8: All Conservancy Meeting: Executive Officer Angie Avery, Deputy Executive Officer Amy Lussier, and Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich attended this annual meeting, where directors and staff from the 10 state conservancies and the WCB gathered to discuss shared priorities and goals.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
June 5, 2025

Letters of Support

March 2025
through
April 2025



11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn, CA 95603 | 530-823-4670 | sierranevada.ca.gov

Chief Matthew Reischman
Deputy Director, Resources Management
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

March 4, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Derek Young

Dear Chief Reischman:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would like to recommend Dr. Derek Young's *Open Forest Observatory 2.0* project for funding.

The SNC is a California state agency with a mission to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada-Cascade Region. The SNC's flagship initiative, the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), 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. Current, precise, reliable data 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, tree mortality, extreme weather events, and catastrophic wildfires have transformed our landscapes and impacted our communities. These events have highlighted the need for strategic, landscape-scale forest management and restoration interventions to mitigate risk to communities while protecting valuable natural assets and preserving key ecosystem functions.

Dr. Young's work will be critical for helping managers identify and prioritize areas where treatments are most needed and will be most effective. His collaboration with the North Yuba Forest Partnership, the SERAL project, and the Mokelumne-Amador-Calaveras project will ensure that his work is developed in partnership with forest managers and will have a direct application to some of the most ambitious and innovative, landscape-scale restoration efforts in the Region.

Dr. Young has a long history of leading applied science efforts in the Sierra Nevada. His involvement as a lead author on the Science Synthesis for the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan update ensures that he is connected to the on-the-ground

information and data needs of forest managers. This project would benefit management and restoration efforts across the Region. I therefore recommend this project for CAL FIRE funding.

Sincerely,

Angela M. Avery

Angela Avery
Executive Officer





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CAL FIRE

Wood Products and Bioenergy Business and Workforce Grant Review Team

April 15, 2025

Subject: Hat Creek Lumber Wood Products and Bioenergy Business and Workforce Development Grant Proposal

Dear Wood Products and Bioenergy Business Workforce Grant Review Team:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) supports the Hat Creek Lumber, LLC (HCL) Hat Creek Lumber Wood Products and Bioenergy Business and Workforce Development grant proposal aimed at enhancing operation and infrastructure at the Hat Creek Lumber Mill located in Shasta County. This facility increases the ability for land managers to implement fuels reduction, thinning, and stand density reduction actions on private and public lands in the region by providing an additional wood processing facility in the region. Additional funding from this grant program will allow the facility to expand operations of the existing mill to increase the pace and scale of forest health treatments which are vital for ensuring the long-term health and safety of our forest ecosystems.

The SNC provided funding in 2024 to the Pit Resource Conservation District (PRCD) to assist in the establishment of the Hat Creek Lumber mill (SNC #1689), which has mutual values to the proposed project. This strategic proposal will enhance the efforts being made by the United States Forest Service, the Shasta Fire Safe Council, the Pit River Conservation District, timber managers and landowners, and other partners in the region to advance forest resilience in the region. Hat Creek Lumber, LLC, and the PRCD have a proven track record of successful grant management and outstanding collaboration with land managers, communities, and agencies in Shasta County.

We strongly urge the grant review team to consider the numerous advantages that this funding will provide, ultimately contributing to the expansion and capacity of a critical wood utilization and wood processing facility which contributes to future workforce training. Thank you for considering our position on this vital matter.

Sincerely,

Angela M. Avery

Angela Avery Name
Executive Officer



cc: Todd Sloat, Hat Creek Lumber, LLC



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California Jobs First
Kern Community College District
2100 Chester Ave
Bakersfield, CA 93301

April 17, 2025

Subject: Letter of support for Lake Isabella community hub

Dear Kern Community College District,

I am writing on behalf of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to express our support for the Lake Isabella Community Hub's application for a California Jobs First grant. This project is led by Sierra Shared Spaces, whose goals align with SNC's mission to support the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra-Cascade Region.

Lake Isabella and the greater Kern River Valley are part of the southern Sierra Region served by the SNC. The Hub's emphasis on rural revitalization through job creation and community collaboration is a great fit for this grant. These goals align with SNC's vision for vibrant recreation and tourism throughout the Region, as well as wildfire preparedness and economic development. Please note that the SNC's support of this project will in no way prejudice the future actions of SNC, nor create any implied support for future funding requests to SNC.

Thank you for considering this request. Please feel free to contact me with any questions about our support of the project.

Sincerely,

Angela Avery
Executive Officer





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Chief John McCarthy
Wood Products Program Manager
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

April 21, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Blue Mountain Electric Company's Grant Application

Dear Chief McCarthy:

This letter is to express support for Blue Mountain Electric Company's grant application. Blue Mountain Electric Company (BMEC) is a shovel-ready 3MW biomass plant in Wilseyville, CA. This project is one of the few shovel-ready forest BioMAT projects to date and is being developed by Phoenix Biomass Energy, a trailblazer in the forest bioenergy sector. Many state agencies, including the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, have invested in this project, providing funding, technical assistance, and the opportunity for peer support.

The BMEC project will support state and federal efforts to combat catastrophic wildfire risk in a highly vulnerable section of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The project's use of advanced gasification technology advances state climate goals by producing carbon-negative power and biochar that can be used for carbon sequestration, water filtration, irrigation efficiency, and more. The project will also provide much needed jobs and energy reliability in one of California's severely disadvantaged rural regions. The project's integration with Calaveras County Water District's rural treatment plant in Wilseyville is a remarkable opportunity to also advance industrial decarbonization, enable rural electric fleet vehicle deployment, and other benefits to the community.

This project received financial support from a prior CAL FIRE grant in 2022. That grant funded the tasks required to get the project site ready for construction. The current grant application would support the actual construction of the plant, getting it to commissioning and operational status in late 2026. This grant will leverage the funds and build on the tasks completed under the earlier grant, supporting the critical tasks needed to get the plant online and ready to process excess biomass from the surrounding forests.

I am happy to support this grant application and hope that you will give it strong consideration for funding.

Sincerely,

Angela M. Avery

Angela Avery
Executive Officer

