



BOARD MEETING

SNC BOARD MEETING

December 11, 2025

Sacramento, CA



Board Meeting Agenda

December 11, 2025 – Sacramento, CA

Board Meeting

December 11, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (End time is approximate)

The Governing Board will break for lunch approximately midway through the meeting.

*California Department of Food and Agriculture
Auditorium
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814*

Board Reception

December 11, 2025

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Following the meeting, Boardmembers and staff will attend a reception open to the public.

*Juju Kitchen
1501 L Street
Sacramento, CA 95814*

Board Tour

December 12, 2025

9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

In lieu of a tour, Boardmembers and members of the public are encouraged to attend the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force meeting:

*California Natural Resources Agency
Auditorium
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814*

Meeting information can be found on the Task Force website at <https://wildfiretaskforce.org/meetings/>.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. [Approval of June 5, 2025, Meeting Minutes](#) (ACTION)

4. [Board Chair's Report](#) (ACTION)

The Board may take action to adopt SNC Resolution No. 12-25-01, honoring Boardmember Robert Johnston for his 16 years of service on the SNC Board.

5. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

b. [Administrative Update](#)

c. [Policy & Outreach Update](#)

- [Attachment A: 2025 Legislative Review](#)
- [Attachment B: Sierra Nevada Conservancy Policy Principles](#)

6. [Legislative Perspectives Panel Discussion](#) (INFORMATIONAL)

A panel discussion with representatives from the California Legislature on state legislative priorities and the Sierra-Cascade Region.

7. [Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair](#) (ACTION)

The Board will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the calendar year 2026.

8. [2026 Board Meeting Schedule](#) (ACTION)

Staff will present the proposed calendar year 2026 meeting schedule for Board approval.

9. [2025-2026 Action Plan](#) (ACTION)

Staff will present the 2025-2026 Action Plan for Board approval.

- [Attachment A: Draft 2025-2026 Action Plan](#)

10. Proposition 4 Early Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

The Board may take action to authorize additional funding to the Proposition 4 Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program and make determinations under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and award grants to the following projects:

a. #1816

Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break project in Butte County in the amount of \$1,298,000 to Chico State Enterprises to be implemented in conformance with the Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan, with California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) authorization of suspension of state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements that fall within the jurisdictions of the boards, departments, and offices within the CalEPA and the CNRA, pursuant to Governor Newsom's March 1, 2025, Proclamation.

b. #1823

White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health project in Mono County in the amount of \$1,493,192 to the California Deer Association with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

c. #1824

Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction project in Madera County in the amount of \$1,896,856 to the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

11. Grant Agreement Amendment Recommendations (ACTION)

The Board may make determinations under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and amend grant agreements for the following projects.

a. #1547

Amend the grant agreement for the Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project in Butte County with the Butte County Fire Safe Council to authorize additional fuels reduction treatment types and locations, with a CEQA Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency.

b. [#1431-LC](#)

Amend the grant agreement for the Veater / Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Project in Madera County with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy to authorize planning activities towards acquisition of a conservation easement on an alternate property, with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

12. Boardmember Comments

An opportunity for Boardmembers to make comments on items not on the agenda.

13. Public Comments

An opportunity for members of the public to comment on non-agenda items. The Board Chair reserves the right to limit the time allocated for each person providing public comment.

14. 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](#) (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, December 5, 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

June 5, 2025 – Northeast Subregion – Cedarville, CA

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

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 Non-Voting Federal Liaisons, Chris Feutrier and Gabe Garcia.

3. Roll Call

Present:

- Nathan Voegeli
- John Brissenden
- Chris Feutrier
- Gabe Garcia
- Bernie Gyant
- Martin Huberty
- Clayton Jordan
- Jennifer Kreitz
- Ric Leutwyler
- Lisa Lien-Mager
- Shane Starr
- Doug Teeter

Absent:

- Bob Johnston
- Michele Perrault
- Victoria Rome
- Dennis Townsend

4. Approval of March 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Action

Boardmember Shane Starr moved and Boardmember Lisa Lien-Mager seconded the motion to approve the March 6, 2025, Meeting Minutes.

After a Board vote the results were: Aye – 8, Nay – 0, Abstain – 1 (Brissenden). The motion passed.

5. Board Chair's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Board Chair Voegeli thanked Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff and the previous day's tour presenters, including the Fort Bidwell Indian Community, Modoc County Farm Bureau, Modoc County Resource Conservation District, Modoc National Forest, and Lomakatsi Restoration Project.

6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery welcomed the SNC's three non-voting federal Liaisons who were absent at the March meeting and provided the Board with updates, including developments at the state level in supporting rapid fire risk reduction, Proposition 4 funding and its impacts to SNC's budget, Executive Order N-25-25 issued by Governor Gavin Newsom that fast-tracks certain critical projects protecting communities from wildfire, events at which SNC had a presence, and opportunities for SNC to improve pace and scale of landscape-level investment.

Boardmember Lien-Mager noted that since Executive Order N-25-25, departments and conservancies under the California Natural Resources Agency have increased support and technical assistance to applicants with qualifying projects. She also acknowledged the confidence within the administration and Department of Finance in conservancies to get dollars on the ground.

b. Administrative Update

Deputy Executive Officer Amy Lussier spoke to the Board on the May Revise and changes to SNC's budget, updates on the state's budget and how that may impact SNC's staff, and SNC's success in requesting an exclusion to the 7.95 percent permanent budget cut per Budget Letter 24-24.

c. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich updated the Board on policy and communications, including the current legislative session and bills being tracked by SNC, state policy events that SNC has participated in, SNC's Sierra Spotlight, outreach SNC is doing to build relationships with the legislature, plans for future legislative field tours, and media displaying fire trends throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff centered around general problems state conservancies face, including consistent funding, sustained investment, and reporting systems currently being used.

7. SNC Governing Board Communication on Federal Participation (ACTION)

Executive Officer Avery provided the Board with information to take action to request staff develop a letter to federal leadership that communicates the value and importance of federal participation on SNC's Governing Board.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on future participation from SNC's federal partners, the desired content of this letter due to situational changes since this idea was brought up in March, and who the letter should be addressed to. Boardmembers and staff addressed recommended changes to this action item based on the discussion and determined the letter should be sent to the Bureau of Land Management Acting Director, the National Park Service Acting Director, and the United States Forest Service Chief Forester.

Action

Boardmember Jennifer Kreitz moved and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded the motion to adopt the staff recommendation. During discussion, Board Chair Voegeli proposed modifying the motion to direct the letter to the folks the Board discussed and to refocus the letter to use it as an educational opportunity to thank federal partners for continued commitment to having representatives on the Board.

Boardmember Kreitz moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded the modified motion.

After a Board vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion, as modified, passed.

8. Proposition 68 Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program Grant Award Recommendation (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Andy 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. #1803-LC

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

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included location of new land parcels in relation to existing property, public land access, the type of traffic that crosses the railroad tracks and their relation to easements on the property, and current trail systems.

Public Comment

Jade Stevens of 40 Acre Conservation League thanked the Board for continued commitment to 40 ACL's work. Stevens acknowledged that this proposal is a step forward in 40 ACL's broader vision and gives the public enriching ways to experience the outdoors.

Darryl Lucien of 40 ACL emphasized the importance of easements on the land and communication that has occurred between 40 ACL and Union Pacific Railroad, and work that has been done to accommodate neighbors in the community.

Action

Boardmember Martin Huberty moved and Boardmember Doug Teeter seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Tahoe Forest Gateway – Zrelak Acquisition (#1803-LC) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$545,000 to the 40 ACL, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a Board vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

9. Proposition 68 Grant Program Approval (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Fristensky provided the Board with information so it 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.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included clarification of the eligibility criteria that determines which projects qualify for the grant program.

Action

Boardmember Teeter moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

- a. Approve the updated *Sierra Nevada Conservancy Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed Grant Program Guidelines*;
- b. Approve the *FY 2025 – 2027 Grant Guideline Companion Document to the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Directed 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.

After a Board vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

10. Proposition 4 Grant Program Approval (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Fristensky provided the Board with information so it 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 Directed Grant Program Guidelines for the next grant cycle.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included whether project timelines can further be streamlined, how the grant program timeline was developed, the importance of being responsible with public dollars, and marketing and communications requirements within the program.

Action

Boardmember Brissenden moved and Boardmember Teeter seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to approve the updated Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines for \$10 million of Proposition 4 funding appropriated to the SNC in 2024-25, and authorize staff to implement the program.

After a Board vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

11. State Water Project Headwaters Investment Pilot (ACTION)

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Covich provided the Board with information to consider and act on a delegation of authority for the executive officer to administer a grant in support of a California Department of Water Resources' State Water Project headwaters investment pilot.

Covich shared a letter from Andrew Schwartz, Climate Advisor at Department of Water Resources (DWR), that thanked the Board for considering this project and the importance of the Upper Feather River watershed to the State Water Project; provided background on how this investment pilot came to be; and explained SNC's essential role in developing this investment.

Comments from Boardmembers included support for giving the executive officer the discretion and authority to approve projects under this agreement – given the relatively small grant amount and the need for timeliness – and the hope that this will lead to more funding in the future.

Action

Boardmember Teeter moved and Boardmember Shane Starr seconded the motion to approve the staff recommendation to:

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.

After a Board vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

12. Action Plan Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Deputy Executive Officer Lussier, Policy & Outreach Division Chief Covich, and Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Fristensky updated the Board on SNC's 2024-2025 Action Plan. This included a brief background on the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan and an overview of the actions achieved from July 2024 to June 2025. Lussier also provided an update on the 2025-2026 Action Plan development and potential changes to the planning process.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff included support for streamlined reporting and Action Plan processes.

13. Boardmember Comments

Board Chair Voegeli thanked 40 ACL for coming to Modoc County and Boardmember Starr for assisting with the planning of the meeting.

Boardmember Brissenden acknowledged the passing of former Board Chair BJ Kirwan.

Boardmember Huberty thanked SNC for its support in the Forest & Fire Film Festival & Forum on May 31 in Calaveras County.

Boardmember Starr thanked SNC staff for organizing the meeting and expressed appreciation for the Modoc community.

14. Public Comments

Laurel Harkness, Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition, shared that her organization was awarded a grant that will be invested across the Siskiyou-Modoc community through August of 2026, and the different streams of work that are being supported by the project.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

Additional Board Materials

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

State of California
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

Resolution

**In Recognition of the Leadership of Robert A. Johnston,
Senate Rules Committee Appointee of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board.**

Whereas, The Sierra-Cascade Region is one of the most significant natural and biologically diverse regions in the world, and is the state's principal watershed, supplying more than 75 percent of the developed water supply to residents, agriculture, and other businesses and industries across the state; and

Whereas, The Sierra Nevada Conservancy was created as a California state agency by Assembly Bill No. 2600, bipartisan legislation, enacted by the California State Legislature and signed into law in 2004 as the Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act to protect this critical Region; and

Whereas, It is appropriate at this time to recognize the leadership of Robert A. Johnston who in 2009 was appointed by Senate Rules Committee Chairman, Darrell Steinberg; and

Whereas, Robert A. Johnston served on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board for 16 years; and

Whereas, Robert A. Johnston is a Professor Emeritus in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at the University of California, Davis, and was a Faculty Researcher at the Institute of Transportation Studies; and

Whereas, Robert A. Johnston taught land-use planning, energy policy, geographic information systems, and impact assessment courses for 34 years; and

Whereas, Robert A. Johnston was an associate planner at Raymond M. Smith and Associates; and

Whereas, Robert A. Johnston has authored and co-authored several publications on land use, planning, and transportation; and

Whereas, Robert A. Johnston served the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board through several milestones, including the establishment of its keystone initiative, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, a large-scale, holistic effort to restore resilience to the forested landscapes and communities of California's Sierra-Cascade Region; wherein the Sierra Nevada Conservancy awarded over \$282 million in grants during Robert A. Johnston's tenure to projects that reduce wildfire risk, improve outdoor access, and protect biodiversity; therefore,

Be it Resolved by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Governing Board that the representation, support, leadership, and service provided by Robert A. Johnston, on the occasion of Mr. Johnston's resignation as a Boardmember, be commended for his efforts to support and serve the Sierra-Cascade Region, its residents, and the people of the State of California.

Be It Further Resolved that this resolution be incorporated into the minutes of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and a suitable copy be presented to Robert A. Johnston who has had great impact on the Sierra-Cascade Region.



Sierra Nevada Conservancy Resolution No. 12-25-01

Dated this 11th Day of December 2025

Nathan Voegeli, Board Chair
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025

Agenda Item 5b: Administrative Update

Budget

The Budget Act of 2025 (SB 101) was signed by Governor Newsom on June 27, 2025; in it, Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) received its expected appropriations: Environmental License Plate Fund for the majority of SNC's operations, reimbursement authority, and ongoing bond funds and rolled-over General Fund for support.

Climate Bond (Proposition 4)

Since late June, SNC has received Climate Bond appropriations in various bills that amended the 2025 Budget Act or previous budget acts:

- \$30.904 million in SB 103 for Watershed Improvement & Wildfire Resilience Early Action grants
- \$50,000 in AB 102 to administer Wildfire Early Action grants
- \$45 million in SB 105 for Regional Projects grants
- \$50,000 in SB 105 to administer Regional Projects grants
- \$9.925 million in SB 105 for Nature-Based Solutions grants

There is additional \$34.355 million in Nature-Based Solutions Climate Bond funding allocated (but not yet appropriated) for future grant programs, plus funding for SNC to administer those programs.

In addition to tracking appropriations, the budget and accounting units at SNC have completed all 2024-25 year-end tasks and are well into 2025-26 budgeting and transacting. The budget unit also continues to work with the Department of Finance and California Natural Resources Agency to build the 2026-27 Governor's Budget.

Human Resources

Due to the statewide budget deficit, California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) and the unions reopened bargaining to negotiate wages and other items. For SNC, all staff members were part of agreements that suspended, until June 30, 2026, Governor Newsom's return-to-office (RTO) order that had required staff to return to in-person work a minimum of four days per week. Per the RTO suspension, all SNC staff retained the telework schedules that were in effect March 3, 2025, which included a minimum of two in-person workdays per week.

On the compensation side, all SNC staff will retain previously negotiated General Salary Increases approved for July 1 or October 1, 2025, depending on bargaining unit, but will

immediately have a reduction in pay in exchange for additional leave time, establishing the new Personal Leave Program (PLP) 2025. The PLP 2025 will have accruals of three to eight hours per month with salary reductions of 3-5 percent, and will continue through 10/30/2026 or 6/30/2027, depending on bargaining unit. The SNC has staff in four different bargaining units, as well as staff classified as excluded and exempt. Partially offsetting PLP salary reductions for all SNC employees is the suspension of employee contribution increases for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB – prefunding retirement benefits) during the period of the PLP program.

Every three years CalHR administers a compliance review, which entails detailed reporting on specific HR actions, including appointments, equal employment opportunity, personal services contracts, mandated training, compensation, leave, policy, and processes. During the most recent compliance review, SNC was found to be in compliance or substantial compliance in all areas. This resolved SNC's only negative finding in the prior 3-year review - that not all SNC Boardmembers had completed the mandatory ethics training. The SNC is very appreciative that Boardmembers completed all required training this cycle.

SNC welcomed two new employees in September. In the Accounting office, Ryan Bangs joined the team as a Senior Accounting Officer (Specialist), filling a recent vacancy. Ryan transferred from Department of Parks & Recreation's (Parks) Statewide Bond Office where he provided financial and data analysis for multiple departments' bonds. Over the course of his career at Parks, he worked as a Historical Monument Guide and at the State Indian Museum and Sutter's Fort. Ryan has a BA in biology and a master's in accounting.

The Field Operations unit welcomed Maya Austin as a Project and Grants Analyst. Over the last decade, Maya has managed grants and led programs that funded Indigenous art and filmmaking. She has worked as a grant manager and program manager for the CA Arts Council, Sundance Institute, First Peoples' Fund, and Crocker Art Museum. Maya has also lectured on Indigenous film at UCLA and worked for the United States Department of the Interior, where she initiated program and process improvements that resulted in higher approval ratings from Native American and Native Hawaiian applicants. Maya has a BA in history and an MA in filmmaking.

Business Services

The SNC offers CPR training to all employees every two years to maximize the number of certified employees, a benefit for staff and SNC's health and safety program. This year SNC added first aid and bloodborne pathogen training to the CPR certification. These courses prepare employees for real-life emergency situations in the field and office settings. A total of 22 employees received certifications.

The SNC has exceeded the mandatory three percent Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) participation and 25 percent Small Business (SB) participation thresholds for

another fiscal year, with 19.24 percent of all fiscal year 2024-25 purchasing dollars going to DVBEs and 67.32 percent going to SBs.

The State Agency Buy Recycled Campaign is a joint effort between CalRecycle and the Department of General Services to implement laws requiring state agencies to purchase post-consumer recycled-content (PCRC) products. The SNC reported fiscal year 2024-25 qualifying purchases and was able to successfully meet the minimum thresholds for post-consumer recycled content in all reportable categories due to the diligence of the purchasing team to seek PCRC alternatives to common purchases.

On an annual basis, the SNC reports on greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories to a nonprofit organization, The Climate Registry (TCR), which converts energy usage into a carbon footprint for California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) reporting purposes. Analysis by CalEPA of SNC's GHG emissions data from 2010-2024 shows a decrease of GHG emissions by 66%, resulting in a reduction of emissions by 43 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) since 2010.

Information Technology

As reported in June, SNC was required to perform its first Information Security Program Audit (ISPA). The process started with a document request in April, the actual audit was performed during the last two weeks of July, and the final audit report was received mid-August. This audit required significant staff time, especially from the IT Team, with help from multiple SNC staff and the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Security Operations Center. The SNC is pleased to report that its score was above the average of departments of similar size, and above the average of other CNRA entities and the state average as a whole. This was not a compliance audit but meant to identify gaps; these gaps will be added to SNC's Risk Register and Plan of Action and Milestones, and progress will be tracked quarterly. The audit results were a significant achievement considering SNC's limited resources compared to larger departments.

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
December 11, 2025

Agenda Item 5c: Policy and 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 first half of the 2025-26 legislative session wrapped up on September 12, and Governor Newsom had until October 12 to respond to bills passed by the legislature. Bills that failed to meet this deadline have become two-year bills and may be taken up in January 2026. Some last-minute agreements came together on high-profile policy issues that are of interest to the SNC, including the passage of a Climate Bond (Proposition 4) expenditure plan and reauthorization of the Cap-and-Invest (formerly Cap-and-Trade) program through 2045.

Please see the 2025 Legislative Review ([Attachment A](#)) document for a comprehensive summary and status update on each of the bills that staff tracked throughout the past year. Some priority bills that can be referenced in this document include:

- AB 766 (Sharp-Collins): Requires state departments to update their strategic plans to advance racial equity.
- AB 880 (Bennet): Would expand the Prompt Payment Act and require state agencies to reimburse grantees for indirect costs at one of four specified rates.
- AB 1207 (Irwin) and SB 840 (Limón): Companion bills to reauthorize Cap-and-Invest.

- AB 1227 (Ellis): Would provide a statutory exemption from CEQA for fuels-reduction projects meeting specified requirements.
- SB 105 (Weiner): Climate Bond expenditure plan, which includes SNC for \$45 million for regional projects and \$9.9 million for nature-based climate solutions.
- SB 131 (Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review): A budget trailer bill, which includes exemptions from CEQA for specified projects including wildfire-risk reduction and Proposition 4 funded nonmotorized trail projects.

California held a statewide special election on November 4, 2025, and the legislature will reconvene on January 5, 2026.

Legislative Outreach Update

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 September Board report was written, staff met with Senator Dahle and her staff, as well as staff from the offices of Senators Allen, Alvarado-Gil, McGuire, and Becker and Assemblymember Bennett. At the time of this report, staff members have meetings scheduled with Assemblymembers Tangipa, Papan, and Macedo.

2026 Policy Principles

The SNC staff has updated SNC's policy principles, formerly the policy platform, for 2026 ([Attachment B](#)). This document describes the general policy areas that are of interest to the SNC and support the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan goals and the objectives of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). It provides a framework from which staff evaluate and analyze policy proposals, and by which staff can identify where policymaker education and outreach may be beneficial. In some cases, SNC may be directly involved in a policy issue, such as when it is identified as an implementing department by the legislature or CNRA. Other policy issues are beyond the scope of SNC's current work, but SNC may still help build understanding of an issue's relevance to the Region.

We have made a slight shift from approaching this resource as a policy platform to overarching policy principles. Staff intend to use this document as more of a lens through which to look at policy proposals and decisions rather than a statement of SNC's position. Much of the content remains the same year to year, so going forward, staff will be updating this document every other year, in alignment with the start of each new two-year legislative session.

Communications Update

Sierra Spotlight

As summer came to a close and fall was officially ushered in, the SNC continued to highlight its work through its Sierra Spotlight articles. While the September Board meeting was cancelled due to the Garnet Fire, [the SNC to host September Board field tour and meeting in Fresno County](#) was posted and shared with many local Fresno media outlets since many were planning on attending the tour. This post was quickly edited to let all know both the meeting and tour had been cancelled.

Also highlighted in the Sierra Spotlight was [Restoring Resilience](#), an article about SNC's support for essential projects that drive nature-based solutions (NBS) across the Sierra-Cascade Region. This article was well-shared with legislators and garnered kudos from fellow state agencies, including those at the California Natural Resources Agency. Switching gears to another of SNC's priorities – land conservation – the incredible news of [Ancestral land returned to eastern Sierra tribe](#) highlighted SNC's involvement in helping the Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe purchase 160 acres of private land – its first land acquisition ever.

SNC Media Mentions

The media mentions by media outlets regarding the SNC were plentiful during this last Board meeting cycle, covering nearly all Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program goals, including recreation & tourism, land conservation, prescribed fire, forest health and resilience, and support of NBS.

The popular website SingleTracks and [the Plumas Sun](#) highlighted SNC's support of a network of single-track trails connecting towns in northern California as part of [a massive 51-mile MTB trail network is under construction in Northern California – but there's a problem](#). Also funded by the SNC, the fuels-reduction work that is [Preparing Lassen Volcanic National Park for Future Prescribed Fire with PCREW and Wilderness Fuels Team](#) was outlined in the SierraDailyNews.

In the land conservation arena, the [Mono Lake Kootzaduka'a Tribe Acquires Ancestral Land with Support from Eastern Sierra Land Trust and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy](#) was promoted by several outlets, including the Sierra Wave and the [Mammoth Times](#). The work in the French Meadows area with a network of devoted partners also received media attention, as YubaNet updated the public on [French Meadows Partnership Enters Seventh Season of Forest Resilience Work](#), with the Roseville Today outlet also reporting on [Efforts to reduce the rising risks of catastrophic fire](#). The County of [Placer awards \\$1.6 million complete French Meadows Ecological Forest Restoration Project thinning and mastication](#) was also in the digital news.

With the state declaring NBS as one of its priorities to help achieve carbon neutrality, the funding from the SNC to projects that leverage these natural assets was showcased quite often in the news. While a rather lengthy heading, Maven's Notebook, for one, reposted the content in one of the NBS Spotlight Posts with its [Sierra Nevada Conservancy: Restoring Resilience: Leveraging nature-based solutions for wildfire protection and carbon storage in Sierra-Cascade Forests](#).

The online website The Union updated readers on the Nevada City and County Deer Creek Fuels Project, which the SNC funded planning for, in its article [Nevada City and county to partner on fuels-reduction project](#), while the Ledger Dispatch (subscription needed) mentioned the SNC in its [Fuel break assists in containment of Tiger Fire](#). Finally, SNC's own Angela Avery was quoted in The Plumas Sun's [Unburned](#), an in-depth article on how the only way to protect a forest and nearby communities from burning is to intentionally burn it (prescribed fire). This descriptive article also appeared in the Bay Nature magazine [Unburned: An Investigation](#).

Sponsorships/Community Outreach

The SNC sponsored the Sierra Nevada Alliance's Great Sierra River Cleanup and Latino Conservation Week. The Great Sierra River Cleanup is a Sierra-wide watershed cleanup event coordinated by the Sierra Nevada Alliance in collaboration with Coastal Cleanup Day.

Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) 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 through a combination of SNC staff and the coordination of other technical assistance providers through a grant to the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts.

Staff successfully closed out the first two block grants, representing an investment of approximately \$9 million in SNC's Regional partners, from the DOC in the second quarter of 2025. Work continues under the third block grant.

Status Round 3

With 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 just over a year 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 is designed in response to needs tribes have directly expressed and 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 the 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 grant 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 occurred throughout 2025.

Initial training was focused on developing grant-management systems and expertise, including in the areas of invoicing and reporting. Technical assistance in areas such as tribal work crew development, NEPA, BIA agreements, human resources support, financial sustainability, GIS mapping for cultural resources, data sovereignty, and GIS mapping for grant applications is being provided by tribal experts and is being offered throughout the program under a subgrant to the Sierra Nevada Alliance. Many of these offerings are also being made available to any tribe or tribal organization in the Sierra-Cascade Region.

Under a second phase of the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program, interested cohort participants had the opportunity to develop priority forest and fire demonstration projects and submit proposals to the SNC for additional RFFCP funding. Out of the 12 tribes participating in the Tribal Capacity Building Program, 10 submitted demonstration project proposals, and all 10 were approved for the maximum allowable budget amount of \$100,000. Tribal stewardship crews, fuel reduction and wildfire resilience projects, and cultural burns are three major overarching categories for projects. Other activities and common important threads that run throughout the demonstration projects include partnership development, project planning and permitting, and GIS program and staff development.

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

Science Update

Wildfire Update

The 2024/25 fire season marked the third consecutive year of relatively low fire activity, with approximately 121,000 acres burned across the Sierra-Cascade Region. [A third year of normal](#) or above-average snowpack helped prevent severe drought conditions. Combined with increasingly sophisticated alert systems and active suppression efforts, these factors kept fire activity low through most of the summer.

However, lightning storms in late August and early September ignited dozens of fires, including two major incidents: The 6-5 fire [destroyed the small, historic town of Chinese Camp](#) in Tuolumne County, while the [Garnet Fire](#) burned nearly 60,000 acres in eastern Fresno County.

Notably, the Garnet Fire burned through a part of the Sierra National Forest with no recent fire history and extensive tree mortality during the 2012-2016 drought, making it vulnerable to extreme wildfire behavior. This section of the Sierra included the [Teakettle Experimental Forest](#)—a 3,300-acre section of forest surrounding Teakettle Creek and one of the largest remaining stands of old growth outside of national parks. Sadly, funding had been secured and years of planning nearly complete in order to conduct a 3,300-acre, [landscape-scale prescribed fire](#) across the entire experimental forest, which hadn't burned since 1860s. On August 28, before the prescribed fire could be implemented, wildfire entered the experimental forest under unfavorable conditions and a [significant portion of Teakettle burned at high severity](#), killing thousands of large, old growth trees and functionally ending decades of forest and fire ecology research at the site.

Not all outcomes from the Garnet Fire were negative. The McKinley Grove of giant sequoias, also within the fire's path, fared relatively well. Favorable weather, extensive preparation, and strong suppression support appear to have limited fire intensity in the grove, helping to preserve this significant stand of giant sequoias.

California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment

A late-stage draft of [California's Fifth Climate Assessment](#) is currently under review. These assessments, released every five years, are developed by teams of academics, researchers, and subject matter experts. The SNC's Regional Scientist, Sarah Campe, contributed to the current report.

Unsurprisingly, the assessment finds that climate change is already affecting the Sierra Nevada, which is experiencing rising temperatures, diminishing snowpack, and shifting precipitation patterns. Temperatures in the Region are projected to increase by approximately 6–9.5 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century. While total precipitation is not expected to change dramatically, its timing, intensity, and frequency are shifting—contributing to more frequent and severe droughts, winter storms, and related hazards, such as flooding and landslides.

Snowpack is projected to decline by up to 90 percent across roughly 65 percent of the Sierra, which will affect streamflow, groundwater recharge, and soil moisture, with significant consequences for winter recreation economies and downstream water users. The “weather whiplash” pattern seen in recent years—rapid swings between extreme wet and dry periods—is expected to become more common, reducing the predictability and reliability of the Region’s precipitation systems.

The vulnerability of Sierra forests to drought, insects, and wildfire is also expected to worsen. Increasing drought stress and fire frequency are already driving shifts in forest structure and species composition.

Sierra communities are likewise experiencing impacts. Many local economies are resource- and recreation-based and are especially vulnerable to climate-driven events, such as drought, extreme heat, and wildfire. Sierra counties tend to have lower median incomes than the California average and include many communities with high proportions of vulnerable residents.

The good news is that efforts are underway to help the Region adapt to a warmer, more variable climate. Research shows that [fuels reduction and vegetation management are highly effective](#) in reducing wildfire severity and improving forest resilience. California’s [nature-based solutions goals](#) are designed to promote resilient and stable forested ecosystems. State agencies—including the SNC—are partnering with tribes, landowners, and resource managers to invest in multi-benefit, collaborative forest-restoration projects that create healthier forests and watersheds, which are more resilient today and better prepared for future climate conditions.

Next Steps

Hearings will begin for the 2026 legislative session in January, and staff will be tracking bills and engaging in educational outreach. Communications efforts will focus on the roll out and success of SNC’s grant programs and will continue to elevate how SNC-funded projects advance the state’s nature-based solutions climate targets. Development of the SNC’s Ready Landscapes and Landscape Grant Program will continue. Staff will continue to provide technical assistance and Regional support for RFFCP subgrantees and the Tribal Capacity Building Pilot Program. In addition, the DOC received \$185 million to continue the RFFCP in the Climate Bond, and SNC is in ongoing conversations with DOC about future support in the Sierra-Cascade Region of California.

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.

2025 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

October 2025

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Purpose

This document is intended to provide a summary of the legislation that SNC staff has been tracking over the first half of the 2025/2026 legislative session. It is divided between bills that the Legislature passed in 2025 and those bills that were not passed but have become two-Year bills and may be acted upon in January 2026. Within those categories, bills are organized by their relative potential impact on SNC and its work.

Bills Acted Upon in 2025

Direct Impact

The following bills have the potential to directly impact SNC. Staff members monitor these bills at the highest priority and seek opportunities for engagement and educational outreach to policymakers, as appropriate.

AB 100 (Gabriel): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024

- Description: Appropriates \$30.904 million of SNC's Proposition 4 funds for watershed improvement, forest health, biomass utilization, chaparral and forest restoration, and workforce development that address needs related to this subdivision and is designed to create career pathways for individuals from disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities, or vulnerable populations.
 - Available for encumbrance or expenditure until June 30, 2028.
- Areas of work: Budget, Grants
- Status: Chaptered
 - Implemented by SB 103 (Weiner)

SB 101 (Weiner) as amended by AB 102 (Gabriel): Budget Act of 2025

- Description: Represents the final three-party (Senate, Assembly, and Administration) budget agreement for FY25-26.
- Areas of work: Budget
- Status: Chaptered

AB 766 (Sharp-Collins): State agencies and departments: strategic plans: diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Description: Requires every state agency and department subject to the governor's authority, including SNC, to develop or update, as applicable and feasible, their strategic plan to reflect the use of data analysis and inclusive practices to advance racial equity and respond to disparities with changes to the organization's mission, goals, and other policies.

- Clarifies that these departments must report to the governor and Joint Budget Committee annually, on April 1, regarding strategic plan development process, content, timetable for completion, and steps being taken to develop measures that could be used for a performance budgeting system.
- Areas of work: Administration
- Status: Vetoed

SB 105 (Weiner): Budget Acts of 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025

- Description: A Budget Bill Jr. associated with the Budget Act of 2025 and prior years.
 - Includes a Proposition 4 expenditure plan with appropriations of:
 - \$45 million to SNC for regional (landscape-scale) projects.
 - \$9.925 million to SNC for nature-based solutions (to reduce the risks of climate change impacts upon communities, fish and wildlife, and natural resources, and increase public access).
 - \$10 million to Department of Conservation for Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program.
- Areas of work: Budget, Grants, Proposition 4
- Status: Chaptered

SB 131 (Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review): Public resources

- Description: A budget Trailer Bill with various California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reforms related to housing development, including exemptions for:
 - Specified wildfire risk reduction projects, including, among other things, projects for prescribed fire, defensible space clearance, and fuel breaks, provided that the project complies with specified requirements.
 - Any activity necessary for the planning, design, site acquisition, construction, operation, or maintenance of public park or nonmotorized trail facilities funded by Proposition 4.
- Areas of work: Budget, CEQA, Grants, Proposition 4
- Status: Chaptered
 - Passage of the 2025 Budget Act was contingent on the Legislature passing this bill.

Indirect Impact

The following bills have potential to indirectly impact SNC’s work, typically due to impacts on relevant partners, programs, and state policy strategies. Staff monitor these bills and

may provide educational information to policymakers when given an opportunity and as appropriate.

AB 149 (Committee on Budget): Public resources trailer bill

- Description: Provides directions on the Administrative Procedures Act as it relates to Proposition 4 funded programs.
- Areas of work: Grants, Administration, Proposition 4
- Status: Chaptered

AB 900 (Papan): Environmental protection: 30x30 goals: land conservation: stewardship

- Description: Requires California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to collaborate with stakeholders including California Native American tribes to include as part of the 2027 annual report on progress towards achieving the goals established in the Pathways to 30x30 Report to include recommendations for effective stewardship of conserved lands, increase ancestral land return, and increase consultation and partnership with California Native American tribes and cultural practitioners.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Grants
- Status: Chaptered

AB 1207 (Irwin): Climate change: market-based compliance mechanism: extension

- Description: Extends the cap-and-trade (cap-and invest) program through 2045 and makes various changes to the market-based mechanism.
- Areas of work: Cap-and-Invest, Climate Change
- Status: Chaptered
 - See companion bill [SB 840 \(Limón\)](#)

SB 88 (Caballero): Air resources: carbon emissions: biomass

- Description: Requires California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop a lifecycle assessment of forest and agricultural biomass waste as well as a comprehensive strategy to support biomass carbon removal.
- Areas of work: Biomass, Climate Change
- Status: Vetoed

SB 470 (Laird): Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act: teleconferencing

- Description: Extends the teleconference provisions of the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act from Jan 1, 2026, to Jan 1, 2030.
- Areas of work: Administration
- Status: Chaptered

SB 840 (Limón): Greenhouse gases: Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: studies

- Description: Sunsets percentage-based continuous appropriations of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) revenues and replaces it with fixed dollar allocations for similar programs.
 - Allocations are directed as follows, in order of priority:
 - \$1 billion/year to High Speed Rail
 - \$1 billion/year to Legislature: \$250 million earmarked for FY26-27 for priority climate programs (\$85 million for climate-focused technological innovation)
 - Any growth in the GGRF above \$4 billion/year will be additional Legislature directed discretionary spending.
 - After previous two priorities are fulfilled, the next \$2 billion/year is allocated as follows (similar to current continuous appropriations): \$800 million for Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities; \$400 million for Transit and Intercity Rail Capital; \$250 million for Community Air Protection; \$200 million for Low Carbon Transit Operations; \$200 million for Low Carbon Transit Operations; \$200 million for Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention; \$130 million for Affordable and Safe Drinking Water.
 - Explicitly requires GGRF expenditures to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions or to support climate change adaptation/resilience and requires CARB to evaluate the role of offsets towards the state's climate goals.
 - Directs CARB to assess and update compliance offset protocols and establishes a new unit within the Legislative Counsel Bureau to support climate and environmental policymaking efforts.
- Areas of work: Cap-and-Invest, Climate Change
- Status: Chaptered
 - Companion bill to [AB 1207 \(Irwin\)](#)

Watch

The following bills are unlikely to impact SNC but may affect the communities we serve or the work of our partners. Staff monitor these for general awareness but are unlikely to engage with policymakers on specific bills in this category.

AB 1 (Connolly): Residential property insurance: wildfire risk

- Description: Requires the Insurance Commissioner to regularly (every five years) evaluate and consider updates to its Safer From Wildfire program regulations to include additional building hardening measures and materials.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space, Insurance
- Status: Chaptered

AB 43 (Schultz): Wild and scenic rivers

- Description: Permanently extends the authority of the CNRA Secretary to add rivers or segments of rivers to the state's wild and scenic rivers system by eliminating a sunset date.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Water
- Status: Chaptered

AB 221 (Ramos): Tribal Nation Grant Fund

- Description: Expands deposits into, and grants from, the Tribal National Grant Fund. Grants a \$600,000 annual award (or 85 percent of available funds, whichever is more) to every eligible tribe that has applied, with automatic renewal each year.
- Areas of work: Tribes
- Status: Chaptered

AB 226 (Calderon): California FAIR Plan Association

- Description: Authorizes the FAIR Plan Association to request the state-run California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank to issue bonds if it is at risk of running out of money to pay insurance claims.
- Areas of work: Insurance, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Chaptered

AB 263 (Rogers): Scott River: Shasta River: watersheds

- Description: Authorizes current emergency regulations on the Scott River and Shasta River to remain in effect for the next five years or until permanent regulations are adopted.

- Requires the State Water Resources Control Board to provide annual updates and opportunities for comment to the public on its progress towards developing permanent flow rules for the rivers.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Water
- Status: Chaptered

AB 518 (Ward): Low-impact camping areas

- Description: Excludes a low-impact camping area from the definition and requirements of a "special occupancy park" if it meets specified conditions.
- Areas of work: Recreation & Tourism
- Status: Chaptered

AB 1004 (Wallis): Tribal financial information: public records: exemption

- Description: Exempts financial information disclosed by a federally recognized Indian tribe or affiliate, to a public agency from the Public Records Act.
 - Requires each public agency agreement or contract with a tribe related to financial assistance (including grants and cooperative agreements) to include a provision stating that any financial information disclosed pursuant to the agreement/contract shall remain confidential and not open to public inspection.
- Areas of work: Administration, Grants
- Status: Chaptered

AB 1139 (Rogers): California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: public access: nonmotorized recreation

- Description: Expands a CEQA exemption for a change in use approved by a park district to allow public access for non-motorized recreation on preexisting roads, trails, and pathways owned or managed by the park district to allow the exemption in cases where the lead agency is a county park agency.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Recreation & Tourism
- Status: Chaptered

AB 1143 (Bennett): State Fire Marshal: home hardening certification program

- Description: Requires the State Fire Marshal to, by Jan 1, 2027, develop a home hardening certification program. The program must identify home hardening and defensible space measures that can be implemented during renovation or property improvements to substantially reduce the risk of loss during a fire and to bring existing building stock into alignment with current building standards for the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space
- Status: Vetoed

AB 1319 (Schultz): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Makes it illegal, until Jan 1, 2032, to transport, sell, offer for sale, possess with the intent to sell, acquire, or purchase any fish, wildlife, or plant that was taken in violation of any federal or state statute that was in effect on Jan 19, 2025.
 - Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to determine if any action taken by the federal government would result in a decrease in protection for endangered or threatened species, and if so, to publish written findings that would add the species to the Fish and Game Commission's list of provisional candidate species, until Dec 31, 2031, and exempts this action from CEQA.
 - This provision is repealed Jan. 1, 2032.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Grants
- Status: Chaptered

AB 1455 (Bryan): State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection: defensible space requirements: ember-resistant zones: emergency regulations: California Environmental Quality Act

- Description: Requires the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to, by Dec 31, 2025, adopt regulations to implement defensible space requirements for an ember-resistant zone within five feet of a structure (known as “Zone 0”) for any person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains an occupied dwelling or structure within a very high fire hazard severity zone as designated by a local agency, in compliance with EO N-18-25.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space
- Status: Chaptered

AJR 10 (Rogers): United States Forest Service: federal funding

- Description: A joint resolution calling on the President of the United States to honor his promise to save American lives and communities through forest management and wildfire risk reduction projects.
 - Requests that he veto any legislation that defunds the U.S. Forest Service and work with Congress to protect and improve these programs.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Chaptered

AJR 11 (Ransom): Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program: federal funding cuts

- Description: A joint resolution urging the President of the United States and Congress to immediately restore full funding for the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Chaptered

SB 254 (Becker): Energy

- Description: Creates an interagency Transmission Infrastructure Accelerator to facilitate the public financing and potential ownership of eligible transmission projects.
 - Funded by 5 percent of Cap & Invest utility allowances.
 - Enacts financing reforms that prohibit utilities from putting the first \$6 billion they spend on wildfire mitigation capital expenditures into their equity rate base.
 - Replenishes the Wildfire Fund with \$18 billion, paid 50:50 by utility shareholders and ratepayers, but would not show up on electricity bills until 2036.
- Areas of work: Cap-and-Invest, Resilient Rural Communities, Wildfire Recovery
- Status: Chaptered

SB 326 (Becker): Wildfire safety: fire protection building standards: defensible space requirements: The California Wildfire Mitigation Strategic Planning Act

- Description: Requires the Deputy Director of the Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation in the Office of the State Fire Marshall, by Jan 1, 2027, and every three years after, to prepare a Wildfire Risk Mitigation Planning Framework to geospatially evaluate wildfire risk mitigation actions to direct coordinated mitigation efforts and long-term planning.

- Requires CAL FIRE to make funds available through the Wildfire Prevention Grant Program to:
 - local governments for wildfire risk reduction projects consistent with the framework developed pursuant to this bill, for FY 29-30 through 44-45.
 - facilitate early implementation of zone zero regulations, including wildfire inspectors at local agencies, for FY 25-26 through 28-29.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Vetoed

SB 427 (Blakespear): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Extends, from July 1, 2030, to June 30, 2035, the annual allocation of \$30 million to the Habitat Conservation Fund, and the continuous appropriation of these monies to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) and others for expenditure, including for the acquisition and restoration of habitat.
- Areas of work: 30x30
- Status: Chaptered

SB 429 (Cortese): Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Program

- Description: Establishes the Wildfire Safety and Risk Mitigation Program within the California Department of Insurance (CDI) for the purpose of developing, demonstrating, and deploying a public wildfire catastrophe model that provides significant wildfire safety benefits to California communities and assists alignment of federal, state, and local wildfire risk reduction efforts.
- Areas of work: Insurance, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Chaptered

SB 514 (Cabaldon): Wildfire prevention: qualified entities: assessments: California Fire Service Training and Education Program Act

- Description: Authorizes the State Fire Marshal to certify contractors and add specified nonprofit organizations to the list of qualified entities who may perform defensible space and home hardening assessment and education efforts, once they have completed the California Fire Service Training and Education Program.
 - Removes the sunset on the CAL FIRE programs that train individuals and entities to augment defensible space and home hardening assessment and education efforts.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space
- Status: Chaptered

SB 616 (Rubio): Community Hardening Commission: wildfire mitigation program

- Description: Establishes the Community Hardening Commission as an independent unit within CDI, to develop new wildfire community hardening standards and facilitate state and local agency wildfire data sharing.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space, Insurance, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Vetoed

SB 629 (Durazo): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Requires the State Fire Marshal, for wildfires that occurred after Jan 1, 2025, to designate an area burned in a wildfire, as defined as a post-wildfire safety area thereby triggering application of state fire protection standards.
 - Requires fire hazard severity zone designations to consider additional criteria, including areas previously burned in a wildfire.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Wildfire Recovery
- Status: Vetoed

SB 630 (Allen): State parks: real property: acquisitions and leases

- Description: Provides a path for state agencies to acquire lands less than \$750,000 in value via an expedited approval process through the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) rather than the Department of General Services (DGS).
 - Makes DPR eligible for other exemptions from DGS approval for acquisitions that meet specified requirements.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Administration
- Status: Chaptered

SB 643 (Caballero): Carbon Dioxide Removal Purchase Program

- Description: Requires CARB to establish and administer the Carbon Dioxide Removal Purchase Program, a competitive grant program for eligible carbon dioxide removal projects.
 - Biomass removal and storage is included as one of four eligible categories, defined as long-term storage of carbon removal products, including, but not limited to, biochar and bio-oil that are generated from agricultural or forest biomass resources.
 - Requires CARB to invest \$50 million in funding for carbon dioxide removal projects between July 1, 2026, and December 31, 2035.

- Areas of work: Biomass, Climate Change
- Status: Vetoed

SB 653 (Cortese): Wildfire prevention: environmentally sensitive vegetation management

- Description: Defines "environmentally sensitive vegetation management" as vegetation management that reduces catastrophic wildfire risk over the long term while supporting native wildlife and biodiversity.
 - Specifies that grant programs funding environmentally sensitive management projects, state entities shall consider incorporating specified criteria into funding guidelines.
 - The definition would apply to the \$200 million in Proposition 4 allocated to CNRA/DPR for "environmentally sensitive vegetation management" (among other purposes).
- Areas of work: Grants, Proposition 4
- Status: Chaptered

SB 676 (Limón): California Environmental Quality Act: judicial streamlining: state of emergency: wildfire

- Description: Requires, on or after Jan 1, 2027, the lead agency of a project that is to maintain, repair, restore, demolish, or replace property or facilities damaged or destroyed by wildfire, within an area which the governor declared a state of emergency, that is not otherwise exempt from CEQA, to prepare the record of proceeding concurrently with the administrative process.
 - Requires any related litigation to be resolved within 270 days of the filing of the certified record of proceedings.
- Areas of work: Administration, CEQA
- Status: Chaptered

Two-Year Bills: May Be Acted Upon in January 2026

Direct Impact

The following bills have the potential to directly impact SNC. Staff members monitor these bills at the highest priority and seek opportunities for engagement and educational outreach to policymakers as appropriate.

AB 404 (Sanchez): California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel-reduction projects

- Description: Would indefinitely extend the SB 901 CEQA exemption, which exempts specified projects on federally owned lands, that have been approved under the National Environmental Protection Act, from CEQA.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Grants
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 880 (Bennett): State government grants and contracts: payment of claims and grantees' indirect costs

- Description: Would expand the Prompt Payment Act to include grants to nonprofits and remove the exception for grants under \$500,000.
 - Would revise conditions for a state agency to dispute an invoice if there is a discrepancy of more than \$250 or 5 percent of the invoice amount.
 - Would require state agencies administering grant programs to reimburse grantees for their indirect costs at one of four rates, as chosen by the grantee.
- Areas of work: Administration, Grants
- Status: Senate Appropriations

AB 1227 (Ellis): California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan: implementation strategies

- Description: Would exempt from CEQA, until Jan 2028, critical fuels-reduction projects, that meet specified conditions, conducted in very high fire hazard severity zone communities.
 - Would require a lead agency to hold a noticed public meeting to hear and respond to public comments before determining that a project is eligible for this exemption.

- Would require California Environmental Protection Agency and CNRA to report to the Legislature, by Jan 31, 2026, on the implementation of Governor Newsom's March 1, 2025, emergency proclamation suspending state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements necessary to expedite critical fuels-reduction projects.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Permit Streamlining
- Status: Senate Appropriations

Indirect Impact

The following bills have potential to indirectly impact SNC's work, typically due to impacts on relevant partners, programs, and state policy strategies. Staff members monitor these bills and may provide educational information to policymakers when given an opportunity.

AB 52 (Aguiar-Curry): Native American resources

- Description: Would authorize a California Native American tribe that is on the Native American Heritage Commission contact list to acquire and hold a conservation easement.
 - Would establish specified processes for consultation with federally and non-federally recognized tribes under CEQA and other state laws that require consultation with California Native American tribes.
- Areas of work: Administration, CEQA, Tribes
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 267 (Macedo): Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: high-speed rail: water infrastructure and wildfire prevention

- Description: Would redirect a 25 percent continuous GGRF appropriation from high-speed rail to water infrastructure and wildfire prevention (via the general fund) for FY 26-27 and 27-28.
- Areas of work: Budget, Cap-and-Invest
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 491 (Connolly): California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: climate goals: natural and working lands

- Description: Would codify AB 1757 Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets and declare that AB 1757 targets should be achieved by identified dates and with priority given to activities that most rapidly and cost effectively increase carbon stocks and net sequestration, protect and support ecosystem function, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Areas of work: Climate Change, Nature-Based Solutions
- Status: Assembly Appropriations

AB 513 (Gonzalez, Jeff): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Would require CARB to include emissions from wildlands and forest fires in the next update of the Scoping Plan.
- Areas of work: Climate Change, Nature-Based Solutions
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 623 (Dixon): Fire prevention projects: California Environmental Quality Act: coastal development permits: exemptions

- Description: Would create a statutory exemption from CEQA for the following types of projects:
 - Fuel modification to maintain 500 feet of defensible space around a building or structure
 - Fuel reduction to prevent/contain the spread of wildfire.
 - Electrical grid resilience or hardening.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Permit Streamlining
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 687 (Patterson): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Would, until January 2031, authorize up to 35 noncommercial wildfire fuels-reduction projects per year in timberland that are less than 1,500 acres, and paid for in whole or part with public funds, to prepare a Timber Harvest Plan to fulfill environmental compliance required by CEQA.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Permit Streamlining
- Status: Senate Appropriations

AB 1226 (Ellis): Air quality: wildland vegetation management burning: permits: exemption

- Description: Would exempt all wildland vegetation management prescribed burning from permitting requirements if conducted by/under supervision of a public fire protection agency or equivalent agency designated by CARB.
 - Would require CARB to develop guidelines/best practices for exempted prescribed fire projects and to ensure public safety/environmental protection.
- Areas of work: Permit Streamlining, Prescribed Fire
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 1456 (Bryan): California Environmental Quality Act: California Vegetation Treatment Program

- Description: Would require the State Board of Forestry, by Jan 2027, to update and expand the California Vegetation Treatment Plan (Cal VTP) Final Program Environmental Impact Report (FPEIR) to include ecological restoration, fuel breaks, and WUI fuel reduction regardless of fire suppression responsibility area, essentially expanding it to include fire hazard severity zones in the local responsibility area (LRA).
 - Would require the update to incorporate in the project description the disposition of biomass generated by the project and to recognize the objectives that integrate traditional ecological knowledge and cultural burning.
 - Would authorize a public agency to partner with a federally recognized tribe to conduct a project under the FPEIR.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Permit Streamlining
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 375 (Grove): Wildfire prevention activities: Endangered Species Act: California Environmental Quality Act: California Coastal Act of 1973

- Description: Would create a statutory CEQA exemption for fuel reduction in the state responsibility area (SRA) within moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones including, but not limited to, through the use of prescribed fire, tree thinning, pruning, chipping, or roadway clearance.

- Would authorize a city, county, special district, or other local agency to submit a "wildfire preparedness plan" to CDFW for activities in moderate/high/very high severity zones and requires CDFW to, within 90 days if sufficient information is provided, to notify the agency if an incidental take or other permit is required, and to provide information on exemptions or streamlined pathways that wildfire preparedness activities qualify for.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Permit Streamlining
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

SB 426 (Alvarado-Gil): California Environmental Quality Act: defensible space

- Description: Would create a statutory CEQA exemption for projects approved/undertaken by a public agency to maintain defensible space.
- Areas of work: CEQA
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

AB 733 (Tangipa): Agency Reports

- Description: Would require each state agency that is required to submit one or more reports to the Legislature, by April 1 annually, to submit a list of all reports the agency has not yet submitted to the Legislature along with a status summary for each report.
 - Would authorize the Legislature to withhold appropriations from any agency that fails to submit timely reports.
- Areas of work: Administration, Reporting
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

SB 795 (Richardson): 30x30 goal: state agencies: plans, policies, or regulations

- Description: Would require all state agencies, including conservancies, to consider the 30x30 goal when adopting, revising, or establishing plans, policies, or regulations and ensure that they are not inconsistent with the 30x30 goal.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Administration
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

Watch

The following bills are unlikely to impact SNC but may affect the communities we serve or the work of our partners. Staff monitor these for general awareness but are unlikely to engage with policymakers on specific bills in this category.

AB 66 (Tangipa): California Environmental Quality Act: exemption: egress route projects: fire safety

- Description: Would create a statutory CEQA exemption, until Jan 1, 2032, for egress route projects in subdivisions without a secondary egress and identified by the State Board of Forestry as high priority for improvement, if specified conditions are met.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

AB 241 (Tangipa): Wildfire and Vegetation Management Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund

- Description: Would establish the Wildfire and Vegetation Management Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund (Fund) and allow an individual taxpayer to designate an amount, in excess of their tax liability, to be transferred to the Fund.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Tax Law
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 261 (Quirk-Silva): Fire safety: fire hazard severity zones: State Fire Marshal

- Description: Would authorize the State Fire Marshal, in periods between review of areas of the state for fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ) recommendations, to confer with entities including public agencies, tribes, nonprofits, project applicants, and members of the public on wildfire-safety improvements or other actions that may impact the area's hazard zone designation.
 - Would prohibit FHSZ designations to be based on risk-mitigation activities.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Appropriations

AB 273 (Sanchez): Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund: high-speed rail: infrastructure improvements

- Description: Would eliminate the 25 percent continuous GGRF appropriation to high-speed rail and instead deposit those revenues into the General Fund for investment in local government for infrastructure improvement.
- Areas of work: Cap-and-Invest, Climate Change
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 300 (Lackey): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Would require the State Fire Marshal to review and update fire hazard severity zone SRA and LRA at least every five years (rather than "periodically" as required by existing law).
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Appropriations

AB 362 (Ramos): Water policy: California tribal communities

- Description: Would identify tribal water uses as a "beneficial use," granting them the same legal protection against quality degradation as other water uses such as domestic, municipal, agricultural, and industrial supplies.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Tribes, Water
- Status: Assembly Floor

AB 372 (Bennett): Budget Acts of 2023 and 2024 (Gabriel)

- Description: Would establish the "Rural Water Infrastructure for Wildfire Resilience Program" within California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to provide matching funds for WUI communities in high/very high fire hazard severity zones to improve water system infrastructure for purposes of protecting properties from fire.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Water
- Status: Senate Floor

AB 376 (Tangipa): Personal Income Tax Law: Corporation Tax Law: wildfires: exclusions

- Description: Would provide an income tax exclusion to a qualified taxpayer, as defined, for any amounts received in a settlement to replace property damaged or destroyed by wildfire for taxable years 2023-2028.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Tax Law
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 389 (Wallis): Personal Income Tax: tax credits: fire-resistant home improvements

- Description: Would authorize a personal income tax credit up to 40 percent of expenses, not to exceed \$400, for costs associated with building or installation of home hardening measures to the taxpayer's primary residence.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space, Tax Law
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 429 (Hadwick): Personal Income Tax Law: Corporation Tax Law: exclusions: wildfires

- Description: Would exempt wildfire payments from income tax for victims of the 2021 Dixie Fire and the 2022 Mill Fire for taxable years 2022-2027.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Tax Law
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

AB 441 (Hadwick): Wildfire prevention: Office of Wildfire Technology Research and Development: wildfire mitigation program

- Description: Would extend the authorization of the Office of Wildfire Technology Research and Development to administer a research and development program to advance tools/technologies to improve the state's preparation for and response to wildfires from Jan 1, 2029, until July 1, 2031.
- Would extend the joint Cal OES/CAL FIRE wildfire mitigation financial assistance program from July 1, 2029, until Jan 1, 2031.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

AB 442 (Hadwick): Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973: working forest-management plans: harvest area.

- Description: Would remove the requirement that a working forest-management plan, under the Z'berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act, only includes an area within a single hydrologic area.
- Areas of work: Landscape Scale, Permit Streamlining
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 624 (Dixon): Office of Emergency Services: federal grant funding; Community Relief Act

- Description: Would require Cal OES to provide the maximum local share of funding administered by the federal Emergency Management Performance Grant program to local and urban areas including to fund financial assistance to local agencies, tribal governments, community-based organizations, and individuals for purposes consistent with federal program guidelines.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Wildfire Recovery
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 706 (Aguilar-Curry): Forest Organic Residue, Energy, and Safety Transformation and Wildfire Prevention Fund Act.

- Description: Would establish the FOREST (Forest Organic Residue, Energy, and Safety Transformation) and Wildfire Prevention Fund," and the fire fuel reduction procurement program. The FOREST is the funding mechanism for the fire fuel reduction procurement program, an incentive program to support sufficient biomass procurement, transport, and beneficial use up to 15,000,000 bone dry tons of forest biomass organic waste per year. The program grants priority to BioRAM and BioMat fleets in existence prior to January 1, 2031, and designates that projects only use non-living organic waste, as defined.
- Areas of work: Biomass
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

AB 758 (DeMaio): Wildfire. Vegetation management.

- Description: Would require CAL FIRE or a local entity with fire prevention and suppression authority, by Jan 2028, and every two years thereafter, to conduct an assessment of all public lands it is responsible for preventing/suppressing fire on to ensure they are not a severe fire hazard.
 - Would require CAL FIRE/local entity, for any undeveloped land acquired by a state or local government, to create a fire prevention plan and report the cost of keeping the land managed.
 - Would require all public lands to have a 200' firebreak on all borders with privately owned land by Jan 2028.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 842 (Gallagher): Paradise Unified School District: school construction funding

- Description: Would appropriate \$21.5 million from the General Fund to the Paradise Unified School District to complete construction of schools damaged by the 2018 Camp Fire.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Wildfire Recovery
- Status: Assembly Policy Committee

AB 846 (Connolly): Endangered species: incidental take: wildfire preparedness activities

- Description: Would authorize a city, county, special district, or other local agency to submit a "wildfire preparedness plan" to DFW for activities in moderate/high/very high severity zones and requires DFW to, within 90 days, if sufficient information is provided, to notify the agency if an incidental take or other permit is required, and to provide information on exemptions or streamlined pathways that wildfire preparedness activities qualify for. The DFW shall impose a fee on a local agency for the cost of reviewing the wildfire preparedness plan submitted by that local agency, consistent with the department's fee authority.
- Areas of work: Permit Streamlining
- Status: Senate Appropriations

AB 929 (Connolly): Sustainable groundwater management: managed wetlands

- Description: Would exempt groundwater used by managed wetlands and small community water systems serving a disadvantaged community from a groundwater sustainability agency's authority to regulate groundwater pumping and assess fees under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Water
- Status: Senate Floor

AB 1039 (Hart): State-funded assistance grants and contracts: advance payments

- Description: Would require state agencies to advance payments to all eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and federally recognized Indian tribes beginning Jan 1, 2026.
 - Would require state agencies to include the percentage of grant funds that may be distributed as an advance payment in the associated grant details on the California State Library grant listing.

- Areas of work: Administration, Advance Payments, Grants
- Status: Senate Appropriations

AB 1156 (Wicks): Solar-use easements: suspension of Williamson Act contracts: terms of easement: termination

- Description: Would update California’s solar-use easement statute, permitting suitable lands with significant water constraints to transition from a Williamson Act contract to a solar-use easement for development of renewable energy projects without rescinding or cancelling the Williamson Act contract, but converting it for the length of the solar project.
 - Would obligate a city or county to require the photovoltaic solar facility to enter into a community benefits agreement with the city/county as a condition of entering into a solar-use easement.
- Areas of work: Permit Streamlining, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Assembly Floor

AB 1236 (Rodriguez, Celeste): Insurance: Climate and Sustainability Insurance and Risk Reduction Grant Program

- Description: Would require CDI to establish and administer the Climate and Sustainability Insurance and Risk Reduction Grant Program to develop proofs of concept that expand insurance options that would address disadvantaged communities most exposed to climate risks, test community-purchased insurance, support nature based solutions (NBS) projects that reduce risk and enhance ecosystem services, support projects that emphasize regional and community-scale approaches to risk reduction, and other purposes as specified.
- Areas of work: Insurance, Nature-Based Solutions, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Assembly Appropriations

AB 1311 (Hart): California Rangeland, Grazing Land, and Grassland Protection Program

- Description: Would appropriate \$400 million of the \$870 million allocated to WCB in Proposition 4 for NBS to eligible entities, as defined, to acquire conservation easements on privately owned qualified property that supports the production of food, fiber, and ecosystem services including wildfire fuel reduction, groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat, and open vistas.

- Funds are allocated regionally based on population, with a relatively small portion going to the mountain region (\$10 million to Alpine, El Dorado, Mono, Nevada, Placer, and Sierra counties) when compared to other regions (central coast, \$95 million; bay area region, \$75 million; and southern region, \$75 million).
- Areas of work: 30x30, Proposition 4
- Status: Assembly Appropriations

AB 1485 (Macedo): Property tax: documentary transfer tax: exemptions: Native American tribes

- Description: Would, until Jan 1, 2031, exempt tribal land return transactions, as defined, from any locally imposed documentary transfer tax.
 - Would expand an existing property tax exemption for property that is used exclusively for the preservation of specified natural resources or open-space lands, to real property owned and operated by a federally recognized American Indian tribe or wholly owned subsidiary, for FY 26-27 through FY 31-32.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Tax Law, Tribes
- Status: Conference/Concurrence

AJR 9 (Wallis): National parks: federal funding

- Description: A joint resolution urging the President of the United States and Congress to immediately restore full and consistent funding and staffing for the National Park Service.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Floor

SB 70 (Seyarto): Public contracts: Small Business Procurement and Contract Act

- Description: Would increase, from \$250,000 to \$350,000, the maximum estimated value of a contract awarded pursuant to the Small Business Procurement and Contract Act, which allows state agencies to award a contract to a certified small business, or to a disabled veteran business enterprise without complying with competitive bidding requirements.
- Areas of work: Administration
- Status: Assembly Appropriations

SB 73 (Cervantez): California Environmental Quality Act: exemptions

- Description: Would allow a housing project within a state conservancy boundary to be eligible for CEQA exemption if the project is not located on a conservation easement, and other specified conditions are met.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

SB 223 (Alvarado-Gil): The Wildfire Smoke and Health Outcomes Data Act

- Description: Would direct the Department of Public Health, in consultation with CAL FIRE and the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, by July 1, 2028, to develop/maintain an integrated wildfire smoke and health data platform.
 - Purposes include to better understand the negative impacts of wildfire smoke on health impacts and to evaluate the effectiveness of investments in forest health and wildfire mitigation on public health.
 - Would create the Wildfire Smoke and Health Administration Fund and allow for voluntary donation to the fund.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 231 (Seyarto): California Environmental Quality Act: the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation: technical advisory

- Description: Would require the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation to consult with regional, local, state, and federal agencies to develop a technical advisory on thresholds of significance for greenhouse gas and noise pollution to assist local agencies in environmental review and compliance.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Grants
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 232 (Seyarto): California Environmental Quality Act: guidelines: study

- Description: Would create a workgroup comprised of CAL FIRE, Cal OES, and the Department of Toxic Substances Control to, among other requirements, establish best practices and recommendations for wildfire-impacted communities, first responders, and other people engaged in wildfire response and cleanup to avoid exposure to heavy metals after a wildfire.
- Areas of work: CEQA, Resilient Rural Communities, Wildfire Recovery

- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 234 (Niello): Wildfires: workgroup: toxic heavy metals

- Description: Would create a workgroup comprised of CAL FIRE, Cal OES, and the Department of Toxic Substances Control to, among other requirements, establish best practices and recommendations for wildfire-impacted communities, first responders, and other people engaged in wildfire response and cleanup to avoid exposure to heavy metals after a wildfire.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Wildfire Recovery
- Status: Assembly Appropriations

SB 269 (Choi): Personal income taxes: Fire Safe Home Tax Credits Act

- Description: Would provide an income tax exemption for costs paid or incurred for home hardening and vegetation management, as defined, up to an aggregate \$500 million for taxable years Jan 2026-2031.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space, Tax Law
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 285 (Becker): Net zero greenhouse gas emissions goal: carbon dioxide removal: regulations

- Description: Would require carbon removal done for the purposes of net zero emissions to be “qualified carbon dioxide removal,” as defined, and to counterbalance greenhouse gas emissions using only forms of carbon sequestration with substantially similar durations.
 - Would include carbon dioxide removed through the use of nature-based solutions and the use of forestry residue as feedstock, if certain conditions are met, in the definition of qualified projects.
- Areas of work: Biomass, Climate Change, Nature-Based Solutions
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 287 (Arreguín): California Trails Conservancy Program

- Description: Would establish the California Trails Conservancy Program within CNRA to promote enhanced and expanded greenways and trail networks, equitable access and diverse trail-based recreational opportunities, policies, practices, and funding opportunities to optimize continued growth and integrity of existing and prospective nature-based and human-powered mobility networks.
 - Would authorize CNRA to form an ad hoc working group composed of various members including state conservancies.

- Includes intent language for Proposition 4 funds to support the program.
- Areas of work: Proposition 4, Recreation & Tourism
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 365 (Alvarado-Gil): Fire insurance: reporting on cancellation and nonrenewal

- Description: Would require CDI to report to the Legislature by Jan 2027, and annually thereafter, the effect that the one-year prohibition against cancellation and nonrenewal of residential property insurance in ZIP codes within or adjacent to a fire perimeter has had on the number of residential properties insured through the FAIR Plan in ZIP codes subject to the prohibition.
- Areas of work: Insurance, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Policy Committee

SB 462 (Cortese): California Farmland Conservancy Program: conservation easements: funding

- Description: Would, beginning in FY 2025–26, annually transfer \$20 million from the General Fund to a newly created California Farmland Conservancy Program Funding Account. These funds, continuously appropriated, to fund the California Farmland Conservancy Program, specifically earmarked for eligible entities to purchase conservation easements ensuring the permanent preservation of agricultural lands.
- Areas of work: 30x30, Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 662 (Alvarado-Gil): Wildfires: defensible space: education efforts

- Description: Would extend the sunset date for CAL FIRE’s home hardening assessment, education, and training programs from Jan 1, 2026, to Jan 1, 2031.
- Areas of work: Home Hardening & Defensible Space
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 678 (Niello): Fire prevention activities: challenges: undertaking.

- Description: Would provide a mechanism for a defendant in a civil action, including under CEQA, challenging a project that engages in fire-prevention activities, as defined, to seek an order requiring the plaintiff to furnish an undertaking, up to \$500,000, as security for costs and damages that may be incurred by the defendant if the bringing of the action by the plaintiff would result in preventing or delaying the project.
- Areas of work: CEQA
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 746 (Alvarado-Gil): Water: Urban Water Community Drought Relief program: Small Community Drought Relief program: high fire hazard and very high fire hazard severity zones

- Description: Would establish, within the Department of Water Resources the "Urban Community Drought Relief Program" (for communities supplied by urban water supplier) and the "Small Community Drought Relief Program" (for communities not supplied by an urban water supplier) and would authorize funding for drought relief, as well as projects that improve infrastructure of water delivery systems for fire suppression in high and very high fire severity zone communities.)
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities, Water
- Status: Senate Appropriations

SB 803 (Durazo): California Conservation Corps: Green Collar Certification Program

- Description: Would specify that young adults in the California Conservation Corps (CCC) program shall generally be engaged in projects that promote or contribute to the conservation of energy and the development or enhancement of clean energy, climate resilience, or sustainable nature-based solutions.
- Require the CCC Director to establish a Green Collar Certification Program that prepares corpsmembers to enter the workforce, apply for an apprentice program, or pursue higher education.
- Areas of work: Resilient Rural Communities
- Status: Senate Appropriations



SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

POLICY PRINCIPLES

January 2026

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Purpose

This document describes a suite of state policy principles necessary to achieve long-term resilience in Sierra-Cascade forests, watersheds, and communities. It represents key policy issues for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), as well as the complementary work carried out by SNC partner agencies and organizations. These issues are consistent with the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, the four goals of the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, and corresponding annual action plans. While this list is not exhaustive, it represents a set of state policy considerations that impact the ability of SNC staff and our partners to support landscapes and communities within the Sierra-Cascade Region (Region).

The SNC works to increase understanding of these issues among state policymakers and to inform state strategies, policies, investments, and implementation plans. This document is intended to be used as a guide when evaluating policy proposals and initiatives. It can also be used as a communication tool to help staff, leadership, and the public understand the relationship between state policy and the Region.

Regional Approach

An overarching principle central to the following policy considerations is the importance of adopting a Regional approach to statewide policies, strategies, and funding. This enables Regional and local entities to identify and respond to their own needs and opportunities. Coordinated efforts within a Region or Subregion are the most effective way to ensure that state, federal, and private resources are utilized in ways that result in maximum benefits for communities and landscapes and ensure progress toward state goals.

Strategic Goal: Healthy Watersheds and Forests

Watershed and forest restoration are imperative to preserve the health and integrity of Sierra-Cascade ecosystems and the services those ecosystems provide across the Region and the state. The SNC recognizes that responding to historical forest-management practices, recent high-severity fires, and the compounding impacts of drought and climate change necessitates a swift, significant, and comprehensive response by local, state, federal, and non-governmental partners. The SNC supports significant investment and supportive policies to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration and build resilience for our forests and our communities.

The SNC Supports Ecological Forest and Watershed Stewardship

- The SNC supports forest restoration and ecological-management practices to increase the resilience of our landscapes to major disturbances, such as fire, drought, and climate change.
- The SNC supports enabling multijurisdictional and landscape-scale projects that are collaboratively planned and provide multiple benefits, including forest health, community protection, land and water conservation, nature-based solutions to climate change, improved outdoor access and recreation, biodiversity, and water resilience.
- The SNC supports increasing the use of beneficial fire as an essential tool to increase the resilience of forested landscapes, including through planning for prescribed and managed wildfire, building a dedicated workforce, and resolving insurance needs for prescribed fire.
- The SNC supports upper watershed restoration as a critical action to maintain the resilience of California's water supply to climate impacts, drought, and wildfire.
- The SNC supports tracking and accountability measures for the forest and watershed management goals laid out in state documents, including the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan (codified in Chapter 387, Statutes of 2021); the Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forest and Rangelands between the state of California and the USDA, Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Shared Stewardship Agreement); the Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy (codified in Chapter 237, Statutes of 2022); the Pathways to 30x30 Strategy for Accelerating Conservation of California's Nature (codified in Chapter 392, Statutes of 2023); and California's Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets as required by AB 1757 (codified in Chapter 341, Statues of 2022).

The SNC Supports Sustained and Coordinated Investment

- The SNC supports sustained and coordinated state and federal investment to build fire and climate resilience through ecological restoration and management, wildfire fuel breaks, and community protection. California’s Fiscal Year 2022-2023 and 2021-2022 wildfire and forest resilience budget packages provided significant support for Regional needs and catalyzed significant progress at scale. The momentum gained as a result can only be maintained through sustained funding into the future.
- The SNC supports the establishment of a sustained, long-term, base funding source for conservancy programs. Annual allocation from cap-and-invest revenues deposited into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund is one potential avenue to fulfill this need. The SNC supports exploring this and other possible solutions.
- The SNC supports efforts that enable and incentivize state and federal agencies to align and pool funding for significant investments in landscape-scale restoration. Coordination between funders can reduce administrative time and costs, leverage investments, create operational efficiencies, streamline reporting, and build economies of scale for workforce and infrastructure.
- The SNC supports prioritizing landscape-scale investments through the lens of partnership readiness to ensure partners have the capacity to strategically, responsibly, and inclusively develop, plan, implement, and manage a multi-year program of restoration.
- The SNC supports extended encumbrance and expenditure periods for forest health and landscape-scale restoration projects. Extending the lifetime of funding can accommodate the longer timescales of natural landscapes and project implementation impacted by extreme and/or unpredictable weather. Longer timeframes would be particularly valuable for landscape-scale initiatives and to increase the use of prescribed fire.

The SNC Supports Catalyzing the Development of Infrastructure for Woody Biomass Utilization at a Regionally Appropriate Scale

- The SNC supports public and private investment in forest-biomass utilization that is considerate of existing socioeconomic and environmental factors, including pollution, and will increase woody biomass processing capacity. Incentives such as low-cost capital, targeted subsidies, and financial backstops can develop markets and mitigate barriers for both existing and new technologies.
- The SNC supports incentives for non-combustion infrastructure development and bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, where feasible.

- The SNC supports transportation subsidies to support the movement of biomass from forests to utilization facilities. Research demonstrates that this strategy can reduce criteria pollutant and carbon emissions relative to the status quo.
- The SNC supports inclusion of forest biomass waste generated from ecologically sound restoration projects as a potential feedstock for new technologies and fuels, such as hydrogen fuel.
- The SNC supports inclusion of the conversion of forest biomass waste generated from ecologically sound restoration projects to bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, low carbon fuels, or carbon negative fuels as a key strategy for achieving California’s climate goals.

The SNC Supports Expanding Restoration Capacity

- The SNC supports expanding the use of programs, authorities, agreements, and funding mechanisms to build and sustain the capacity of partners that plan and implement restoration projects. The Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program and the Good Neighbor Authority program are key tools to building organizational capacity, catalyzing strategic project development, generating a pipeline of restoration projects, and supporting tribal and rural Sierra-Cascade economies.
- The SNC supports investments in the capacity of federal-land managers across the Sierra-Cascade to execute the Shared Stewardship Agreement between California and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). As the manager of nearly 70 percent of Sierra-Cascade forests, the federal government is a critical partner to achieve California’s landscape and community-resilience goals.
- The SNC supports the development of dedicated workforce for forest restoration, including fuels reduction, cultural burning, and prescribed fire.

The SNC Supports Natural & Working Lands in California’s Climate Strategy

- The SNC supports the implementation of the actions identified in California’s Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy to accelerate progress towards the nature-based solutions climate targets identified pursuant to AB 1757 (2022, C. Garcia) in the Sierra-Cascade. Actions, such as ecological forest restoration, meadow restoration, and increased use of beneficial fire to reduce the risk of large, damaging wildfire, improve resilience to stressors, stabilize carbon storage, and promote post-fire forest regeneration can help achieve carbon neutrality, protect climate-vulnerable human and wildlife communities, improve public health and safety, and expand economic opportunity.

- The SNC supports investment in forest health, wildfire resilience, and mountain-meadow restoration as actions to improve climate adaptation and resilience to extreme heat, as identified in California’s 2022 Climate Adaptation Strategy and Extreme Heat Action Plan.
- The SNC supports conservation and restoration of natural and working lands as a critical element of meeting the state’s goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. Specifically, SNC supports investment in monitoring, tracking, and accounting for progress towards the nature-based climate solutions targets identified pursuant to AB 1757 (2022, C. Garcia) and carbon sequestration outcomes resulting from those efforts, with particular focus on forested landscapes.

The SNC Supports Regulatory Streamlining to Advance Forest Resilience

- The SNC supports targeted regulatory changes to reduce barriers to planning and implementing science-based forest-health, fire-resilience, and habitat-restoration projects, including fuel-reduction treatments, post-fire restoration and reforestation, prescribed and cultural fire, biomass utilization, and meadow restoration.
- The SNC supports permitting, statutory, and other regulatory reforms (e.g., the California Environmental Quality Act), where responsible and appropriate, that increase the pace and scale of restoration and resilience efforts while maintaining environmental integrity.

Strategic Goal: Resilient Sierra-Cascade Communities

Predominantly small, rural, and mountainous, with incredible natural landscapes and limited economic diversity, Sierra-Cascade communities often face unique circumstances relative to many other parts of California. Developing critical infrastructure, like broadband access, and social services, like rural healthcare options, requires wide-ranging action that is beyond SNC’s jurisdiction, but their absence constrains efforts to achieve SNC’s mission. With leadership from the appropriate partner agencies and organizations, the SNC supports initiatives that will increase the resilience of our communities to both natural and economic risks, by expanding access to financial and technical resources, by investing in both people and infrastructure, and by empowering historically underserved communities. In all efforts to build community resilience, the SNC recognizes the importance of prioritizing support for the most vulnerable communities, communities with the least capacity, and communities that have experienced historic disinvestment.

The SNC Supports Economic Opportunity

- The SNC supports workforce education, on- and off-the-job training, placement, and succession planning in key job markets related to forest and watershed restoration, nature-based climate solutions, community resilience, and outdoor recreation. Investments to scale existing workforce development programs and fill in gaps in areas without programs can catalyze the restoration economy in the Sierra-Cascade.
- The SNC supports using state and federal granting and contracting procedures to increase financial stability and enable capacity investments for partner organizations and tribal entities, while also improving job stability for workers. These procedures can include extended contacting periods, grant advances, prompt reimbursement, and local preference contracting.
- The SNC supports strategic state investments in emerging markets and innovative technology to provide early stability and incentivize future private investment in value added wood products and other enterprises needed to sustainably and responsibly utilize biomass byproducts from forest-restoration work while also strengthening local, rural economies.

The SNC Supports Community Vitality

- The SNC supports actions that ensure workforce housing is available and affordable in the Region. As local and global socioeconomic conditions have negatively impacted housing accessibility for middle- and low-income workers and residents, responding to changing conditions is necessary to advance Regional goals and preserve community vitality.
- The SNC supports actions that address the insurance crisis for homeowners and businesses. Available and affordable insurance is essential to community stability.
- The SNC supports home and business insurance rate setting that is informed by risk modeling that accounts for wildfire mitigation actions taken at the home, community, and landscape scale.

The SNC Supports Resilience and Recovery

- The SNC supports sustained investment in community protection against wildfire threat, including landscape-level thinning and prescribed fire to reduce fire intensity; the creation and maintenance of strategic fuel breaks to protect critical infrastructure and provide safety for fire managers; and defensible space and home-hardening activities to protect individual structures.

- The SNC supports sustained investment in Regional capacity building, coordination, planning, and implementation to increase resilience to climate threats, including wildfire, drought, extreme heat, and extreme precipitation, through strategies such as funding for capital improvements; public outreach and education; and capacity for local and tribal engagement.
- The SNC supports sustained investment in tribes and tribal organizations to increase their capacity enabling greater engagement and leadership in planning, collaboration, and implementation of forest and watershed resilience and other land stewardship projects. This includes technical assistance and one-on-one support designed to elevate tribal partners to compete for grants on a level playing field.
- The SNC supports investment in rural water infrastructure to support fire suppression, increase fire resilience, and protect water supply in the face of drought, climate change, and other stressors.
- The SNC supports investment to mitigate the economic and public-health impacts of wildfire smoke, especially among vulnerable populations. This includes the development of community resilience and evacuation centers where they are lacking.
- The SNC supports financial and technical recovery assistance to areas significantly impacted by wildfire and smoke, especially in areas with limited capacity and resources. Post-fire landscape recovery activities include hazard tree removal, erosion control and sediment reduction, culvert replacement, reseedling and reforestation, invasive weed control, fire-line restoration in sensitive habitat areas, and post-fire forest restoration and resilience planning. Community recovery needs include housing for displaced forest and restoration workers, replacement of community centers, new and improved evacuation centers, support for business redevelopment and community planning, and cultural-resource protection. Some of these activities begin immediately post-fire and continue for many years.
- The SNC supports investment and technical assistance programs that support climate-smart community recovery, such as investments in community-led planning and repurposing of land post-fire.

The SNC Supports Empowerment and Representation

- The SNC supports empowerment of tribes and Indigenous people in our Region to employ traditional ecological knowledge, steward ancestral lands, and practice cultural and spiritual traditions, including the use of cultural fire. Funding and capacity-building programs designed for tribes can help meet specific needs.

- The SNC supports the return of ancestral lands to tribes and tribal entities, in recognition of their role as original stewards of the Sierra-Cascade Region. The SNC supports targeted investment in the Region’s underserved and vulnerable populations, including people of color, people with a disability, Indigenous people, and people living in poverty.
- The SNC supports improved metrics and data collection to reflect rural, low-income, and low-population density communities in statewide assessments and funding allocations. Due to a lack of data, geographic isolation, and limited capacity, such communities may not be adequately represented, potentially cutting them off from funding and technical-assistance opportunities.
- The SNC supports an understanding that statewide equity initiatives should reflect the unique characteristics of rural areas.

Strategic Goal: Sustainable Recreation and Tourism and Equitable Outdoor Access

The Sierra-Cascade Region is home to world-class opportunities for tourism and outdoor recreation. Beloved by local community members, urban visitors, and international travelers, outdoor recreation in the Sierra-Cascade also generates significant economic value in the Region. Recently, there has been an increased understanding of the importance of outdoor access for physical and mental health and the existing inequitable access to outdoor spaces and activities. The SNC recognizes this reality and supports leadership and investment for coordinated and collaborative recreation management and increased access for underserved communities.

- The SNC supports investment in Sierra-Cascade recreation access and infrastructure.
- The SNC supports implementation of the sustainable recreation provisions of California’s Shared Stewardship Agreement with the USFS and California’s Joint Strategy for Sustainable Outdoor Recreation and Wildfire Resilience.
- The SNC supports funding for capacity-building initiatives for land managers and partners to develop and maintain recreation assets in a coordinated, equitable, and sustainable fashion.
- The SNC supports efforts to plan for and reduce the impacts of overuse and over-tourism.

- The SNC supports projects to expand outdoor recreation opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, including those that improve and/or expand parks, open spaces, and trails while also promoting adaptation and resilience of natural resources.
- The SNC supports multiple benefit projects that expand recreation opportunities and reduce climate impacts for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, including those that reduce pollution caused by hazardous materials resulting from wildfire.

Strategic Goal: Conservation and Stewardship of Natural and Working Lands

Conserving land and waters in the Sierra-Cascade is a key strategy to protect forest and watershed health, build community resilience, and expand recreation access. Conservation can also help protect biodiversity, maintain carbon storage, build climate resilience for landscapes and communities, protect water resources, ensure access to cultural sites, and support working landscapes. The SNC supports voluntary conservation to sustain this suite of public benefits for current and future generations.

- The SNC supports implementation of the actions identified in California’s Pathways to 30x30 Strategy to accelerate Regionally led conservation, increase voluntary conservation easements, execute, expand, and accelerate environmental restoration and stewardship, and align investments to maximize conservation benefits, among other actions.
- The SNC supports investing in land trusts and other conservation organizations to fund voluntary land conservation acquisitions and strategic planning, capacity building, partnership and project development, and ongoing land stewardship and management.
- The SNC supports capacity-building investments for land conservation partners, including land trusts, tribes, and tribal organizations.
- The SNC supports increasing direct land stewardship and conservation by tribes and Indigenous people to ensure protection of important cultural sites and resources.
- The SNC supports Regional conservation strategies and collaborative, community-based decision-making to align conservation decisions with community goals and interests.

Organizational Goal: Maintain SNC's Strength and Effectiveness

- The SNC supports efforts to secure consistent, reliable, and diverse funding to ensure long-term organizational health and the ability to provide needed resources across the Region.
- The SNC supports consolidating and streamlining reporting requirements, where appropriate, to facilitate accountability and transparency and reduce administrative burden on the department and project partners.
- The SNC supports large grants, or block grants, to Regional entities to distribute resources informed by local knowledge and based on Regional needs and capacities while also ensuring that overarching state goals are met.
- The SNC supports the use of state funds as matching funds to support local and state agencies in leveraging additional private and federal resources for wildfire prevention, forest resilience, community protection, and home/community hardening.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025

Agenda Item 6: Legislative Perspectives Panel Discussion

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Policy & Outreach Division supports SNC's role as a bridge between the Sierra-Cascade Region (Region) and the state. The SNC staff members focus on educating key decision-makers about the value of the Region, communicating about the Region's policy and funding needs, and building relationships with policymakers and their staff.

In 2015, AB 985 (Dahle, Chapter 89, Statutes of 2015) established the role of legislative liaison to SNC. The statute allows for the appointment of two senators and two assemblymembers to serve as liaisons to the SNC Governing Board and to provide insight, guidance, and leadership on issues important to the Region and its residents. In September 2018, Governor Brown signed AB 2849 (Stone, Chapter 499, Statutes of 2018) into law, which updated the legislative liaison role and required that one member from each house of the Legislature represent a district partially or wholly inside the Region and that one appointed member from each house represent a district outside the Region.

Current Status

Senators Megan Dahle (R-Bieber) and Jerry McNerney (D-Pleasanton) and Assemblymember Heather Hadwick (R-Alturas) are serving as SNC's legislative liaisons, providing valuable perspective and offering staff an important point of connection in the Capitol. At the time of this report, the Assembly legislative liaison appointment representing a district outside of the SNC Region was vacant.

The California state senate and assembly wrapped up the regular session of their 2025-2026 legislature, which is a two-year session, in September. The Legislature is now in interim recess before the second year of the session begins in January 2026.

Goals of the Panel Discussion

This Legislative Perspectives Panel Discussion will provide an opportunity for our legislative liaisons to share anticipated focus areas for the second year of the 2025-26 legislative session, and for Boardmembers to provide Regional insight into policy areas impacting the work and well-being of the Region. There are two main goals for this facilitated discussion. One is for legislative liaisons to gain a solid understanding of the Region's values and challenges, as well as some ideas for policy solutions that can advance wildfire resilience, vibrant rural communities, and climate adaptation in the Region and throughout the state. The second is for Boardmembers to gain perspective on the framework that the Legislature is working within, and to identify potential avenues for

Sierra-Cascade communities and resources to be better represented and supported by state policy.

Next Steps

Staff is preparing outreach and engagement strategies for the final year of the 2025-26 legislative session and will incorporate input and guidance on policymaker education provided by legislative liaisons and the SNC Governing Board in this panel discussion.

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
December 11, 2025

Agenda Item 7: Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair

Background

Under Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) governing statute, the SNC Governing Board is to elect a Chair of the Board and a Vice-Chair annually. Out of the necessity for a Governor's appointee to administer oaths of office for newly appointed Boardmembers, the Chair has been selected from the three Gubernatorial appointments. By tradition, the Vice-Chair has been selected from one of the six county supervisor representatives.

Current Status

The current terms for Board Chair, Nathan Voegeli, and Vice-Chair, Dennis Townsend, end with calendar year 2025.

Next Steps

The Board will elect new officers for calendar year 2026.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board elect new officers for calendar year 2026.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025**

Agenda Item 8: 2026 Board Meeting Schedule

Background

Each year, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) holds four quarterly Board meetings; one meeting is usually coupled with the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Summit. In December 2025, instead of the WIP Summit, Boardmembers are encouraged to attend the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force meeting. The other three quarterly Board meetings are held in the SNC Region, rotating between Subregions. In-Region Board meetings have been an important aspect of SNC's outreach, ensuring that Board members and staff are accessible to constituents and can learn about and connect with the communities and their needs throughout the 27-plus million acres area. For these reasons, all in-Region Board meetings have traditionally been scheduled for two days and include an informative, in-person field tour.

Additionally, SNC was required to cancel its September Board meeting due to its proximity to the Garnet Fire as well as the unhealthy Air Quality Index. Although the Executive Officer has the general authority to cancel meetings due to an emergency, SNC wants to make the authority and delegation clear.

Current Status

The proposed schedule for 2026 continues the practice of three in-Region meetings and one Sacramento meeting. Various scheduling and location factors were considered when building the proposed schedule.

Next Steps

The following 2026 schedule is proposed for Board approval:

- March 4 & 5 – Butte County (North Central Subregion)
- June 3 & 4 – Trinity County (Northwest Subregion)
- September 2 & 3 – Mono County (Southeast Subregion)
- December 10 & 11 – Sacramento

Recommendation

- **Approve the 2026 Board meeting schedule, with the understanding that the approved schedule is subject to change due to changed circumstances and the press of business.**

- **Delegate its authority to the executive officer to reverse the order of the tour and meeting, if necessary, now and in the future Board meeting schedules.**
- **Delegate its authority to the executive officer, in consultation with the Board Chair, to cancel a meeting in emergency circumstances now and in future Board meeting schedules.**
- **Delegate its authority to the executive officer, in consultation with the Board Chair, to add additional meetings if business requires, with the understanding that staff will inquire with Boardmembers about their calendar availability to ensure a quorum will be achieved now and in the future Board meeting schedules.**
- **Direct staff to take the necessary actions for successful implementation.**

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025

Agenda Item 9: Action Plan Update

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) Strategic Plan guides the operations of the SNC and requires that staff develop an annual Action Plan for Board approval each year. The annual action plans identify specific activities that will be of particular focus over the corresponding fiscal year. The Action Plan is intended to keep staff efforts aligned with the SNC's five-year Strategic Plan; it is developed in a way that considers current issues and fiscal health, identifying actions with the highest potential to be carried out in the given year, while advancing the broader vision of the Strategic Plan.

This means Action Plan themes vary—some years may be heavily oriented toward administering program funding when budgets are robust, whereas other years may focus on staff assistance, communications, and partnership development that SNC staff provides through its baseline operations.

Current Status

This [Action Plan \(Attachment A\)](#) is the second annual plan of the 2024 – 2029 Strategic Plan. It covers the period from September 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The actions identified advance the SNC's four Regional goals, as well as internal organizational goals.

Next Steps

As stated in the Strategic Plan and approved by the Board, at the end of each Action Plan cycle, staff will report to the Board on the overall success or challenges to the actions, as proposed, and bring forward the next year's plan.

For this current Action Plan (September 2025 through June 2026), it is anticipated that staff will present on Action Plan outcomes at the June 2026 Governing Board meeting.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the 2025-2026 Action Plan and direct staff to take the necessary actions for its successful implementation.



Sierra Nevada Conservancy

2025 – 2026

ACTION PLAN

This Action Plan is the second plan of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) 2024 – 2029 Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). It covers September 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Under this Action Plan, staff will advance all Regional Goals and SNC’s organizational goals, which have been condensed for reference below. An icon has been created for each goal and placed next to each action that advances that goal. For a complete description of each Regional and organizational goal, and their supporting objectives, please refer to the [Strategic Plan](#).



Healthy Forests and Watersheds

The Strategic Plan identifies four primary objectives that support the Healthy Forests and Watersheds Regional goal: to build capacity of Regional partners; to support partners’ readiness for and implementation of large-landscape programs of work; to administer grant programs and support other funding opportunities through which partners may access SNC funding; and to support the planning and development of infrastructure to process and utilize woody biomass generated by forest health and restoration projects.



Resilient Sierra-Cascade Communities

The Strategic Plan identifies two primary objectives that support the Resilient Sierra-Cascade Communities Regional goal: to deepen relationships and expertise regarding the social and economic challenges facing the Region; and to administer funding for projects and plans that advance community resilience.



Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access

The Strategic Plan identifies objectives that support the Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Regional goal: to build the capacity of partners to plan, prioritize, and implement projects; to administer grant programs and support other funding opportunities through which partners may access SNC funding for plans and projects; to support increased access to nature for communities that have not traditionally had equitable access; and to support partners’ readiness for and implementation of large-landscape programs of work.



Conservation and Stewardship of Natural & Working Lands

The Strategic Plan identifies four primary objectives that support the Conservation and Stewardship of Natural & Working Lands Regional goal: to build the capacity of partners to plan, prioritize, and implement projects; to administer grant programs and support other funding opportunities through which partners may access SNC funding for plans and projects; to support conservation and stewardship efforts by partners that have not historically participated in or benefitted from traditional land-conservation actions; and to support partners' readiness for and implementation of large-landscape programs of work.



Organizational Goals

The Strategic Plan identifies several primary objectives that support organizational goals: to secure consistent, reliable, and diverse funding to ensure long-term organizational health and the ongoing ability to provide needed resources across the Region; to focus on equity in support of fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, and in the way the SNC approaches its work with external partners; to maintain strong internal operations; and to support staff as the SNC's greatest asset.

Along with the primary objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan, the organizational goals also include the ongoing core activities that are essential to SNC's operation that are performed by each division to help the SNC allocate resources effectively and make strategic decisions that enhance performance and growth while serving the Region.

Examples of SNC's core activities include state-level policy engagement and development, field project development and technical assistance, grant management and grant program administration for direct and reimbursable funding, policymaker and partner relationship development, funding strategy development, Regional science engagement and geospatial analysis, capacity building, tribal engagement and coordination, human resources and organizational wellness, business services, financial services, information technology services, legal services, and government accountability.

2025-2026 Actions

- a. Position the SNC for future funding through communications and public policy engagement on California’s Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets.



- b. Launch the Governing Board-approved funding partnership with the California Department of Water Resources State Water Project in the Feather River Watershed and implement a communications strategy focused on increasing awareness of the benefits of the partnership’s investment in source watersheds.



- c. Accept Proposition 4 Regional Project funding, finalize the SNC’s landscape-scale investment approach, make first-round funding recommendations to the Governing Board, and communicate about the benefits of investing in landscape-scale restoration.



- d. Begin the development of the SNC’s Regional Priority Plan (RPP) virtual platform, a deliverable for the SNC’s RFFCP block grant from the California Department of Conservation, with RFFCP subgrantees and engage in the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force’s work to develop Regional investment strategies informed by the RPP.



- e. Complete the capacity-building workshop phase of SNC’s Tribal Capacity Building Pilot, funded by the RFFCP, and launch the demonstration project phase.



- f. Expand access to SNC’s Tribal Capacity Building Pilot technical assistance workshops beyond pilot cohort members to all tribes and tribal organizations across the Region.



- g. Submit request to bring SNC’s accounting functions in-house to increase operational efficiencies and provide savings to the state.



- h. Explore deployment of California Natural Resources Agency Project Tracking and Reporting (RAPTR) system for Proposition 4 reporting on completed projects, including evaluating whether transitioning all current grant management to RAPTR could be advantageous to the department and stakeholders.



- i. Increase opportunities for staff engagement by establishing and encouraging the use of a virtual suggestion box, establishing and launching an annual anonymous employee satisfaction survey, establishing an employee recognition board, and evaluating meetings to increase efficiency, benefit, and productivity.



- j. Complete oversight coordination and management of Forest & Watershed Health Project activities and Biomass Utilization Fund activities associated with the National Disaster Resilience grant.



- k. Develop Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program proposals in conjunction with Regional partners. Evaluate proposals, make recommendations to the SNC Board for approval, and execute grant agreements.



- l. Develop Sustainable Recreation, Tourism, and Equitable Outdoor Access Grant Program proposals in conjunction with Regional partners.



- m. Update grant documents (proposal forms, reporting templates, etc.) per California Natural Resources Agency guidance on Proposition 4.



- n. Revise *Managing Your Grant Handbook* and distribute it to grantees.



- o. Conduct outreach to 96 conservation easement holders established by the Pacific Forest & Watershed Lands Stewardship Council to ascertain the performance of their duties in preparation for SNC's required report to the California Public Utilities Commission.



- p. Expand understanding about the social and economic challenges facing the Region by deepening relationships, building new partnerships, scoping what expertise may be needed and what questions to explore for SNC to adapt and improve its services.



- q. Develop and institutionalize an updated process for tracking and reporting SNC project impacts.



- r. Engage and inform SNC staff on the upcoming statewide California State Payroll System (CSPS) project that will impact timekeeping and payroll processes. Create a CSPS employee awareness plan and invite staff to provide feedback and input. Participate in the planning process and ensure that SNC employee voices are heard.



Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025

**Agenda Item 10: Proposition 4 Early Action Wildfire and
Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Award
Recommendations**

Background

The Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program (Program) is funded through Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (Climate Bond). Assembly Bill 100 amended the California Budget Act of 2024, appropriating \$30.904 million to Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) as local assistance funding to support “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)). The purpose of this current Program is to 1) focus on the highest wildfire resilience priority projects in the Sierra-Cascade Region, including funding projects to protect communities; and 2) support projects including those that can utilize the [Statewide Fuels Reduction Environmental Protection Plan](#) (EPP) established by California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA).

The Program was designed to support Governor Newsom’s March 1, 2025, emergency proclamation (Proclamation) to confront the severe ongoing risk of catastrophic wildfires that threaten public safety across California. The Proclamation authorized the secretaries of CNRA and CalEPA 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. As a result, CNRA and CalEPA developed the EPP process, by which project proponents may request to have critical fuels-reduction projects be suspended from several California laws, including, but not limited to, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as designated under the Governor’s Proclamation.

In June 2025, the SNC Governing Board approved the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines, and allocated \$10,000,000 in funding from the early action appropriation of the Climate Bond. The primary focus of the Program is protecting people and communities. 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 emissions; and supporting Regional economies.

The Program adopted the requirements of the EPP, thus 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.

Current Status

The SNC announced a solicitation for Statements of Interest in June 2025. The SNC staff reviews all Statements of Interest for eligibility and consistency with Program purposes and invites those projects to submit Proposals. Staff of the SNC work closely with applicants in developing project Proposals, including conducting site visits. Proposals will be accepted on a continuous basis until January 31, 2026, or while funding remains available. Proposals are evaluated based upon the scoring criteria in the Guidelines. A project Proposal must receive an evaluation score of 80 points or above to be considered for a funding award recommendation.

Response to Solicitation

The SNC received a robust response to the request for Statements of Interest. As the grant cycle is still active, with Statement of Interest reviews, Proposal development, and Proposal reviews still underway, final numbers related to submissions are not yet known. Below is a summary of the status of Statements of Interest as of October 15, 2025.

Statements of Interest Submissions

Status as of October 15, 2025	Number of Proposals	Funds Requested
Statements of Interest invited to submit Proposals	25	\$22.5 million
Statements of Interest under consideration	15	\$11.2 million
Statements of Interest not invited to submit Proposals	14	\$11.5 million
Total Statements of Interest submitted	54	\$45.2 million

Projects Currently Recommended for Award

The SNC held the first quarterly evaluation of full Proposals during the first week of September. Twelve Proposals requesting \$12.4 million had been submitted by September 1, 2025. The SNC staff evaluated the twelve Proposals based upon the scoring criteria in the Guidelines. Eleven of the twelve Proposals scored above 80. Three Proposals, which scored 90 points or higher, are currently recommended for award. The remaining Proposals are still under consideration for potential recommendation at the March 2026 Board meeting.

a. Project #1816

Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break

Chico State Enterprises

\$1,298,000

Butte County

The Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break project will establish 6.5 miles of a 12.3 mile roadside fuel break on Musty Buck Ridge in the footprint of the 2024 Park Fire, enabling the application of large-scale, cross-boundary prescribed fire treatments in Big Chico Creek Canyon. Spanning a total of 680 acres, with SNC funding a minimum of 389 acres (6.5 miles) on public and private lands, the project will create a continuous fire holding feature strategically protecting 105,000 residents residing in Cohasset, Forest Ranch, and the City of Chico in Butte County. The project ties together existing, already-built fuel break segments and is a key component of the Butte County Community Wildfire Protection Plan and the CAL FIRE Butte Unit Plan. In addition to immediate risk reduction, the fuel break will serve as a strategic staging area for future prescribed fire operations and improve access to a remote, high-risk ridge for wildfire response. The project will protect the critical habitat of Big Chico Creek, home to Spring Run Chinook Salmon, and to multiple species, including the Pacific Fisher, Foothill Yellow Legged Frogs, and Golden Eagles. The project spans public lands in Bidwell Park and the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve that serve over 500,000 visitors annually.

CEQA Compliance: CalEPA and CNRA authorized the Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break project for suspension of state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements that fall within the jurisdictions of the boards, departments, and offices within the CalEPA and the CNRA, (including, but not limited to, CEQA) pursuant to Governor Newsom's March 1, 2025, Proclamation. The project will be implemented consistent with all conditions of the suspension authorization, including being conducted in conformance with the EPP.

[Access the Project Details \(Project 1816\)](#)

[Access the Musty Buck Fuel Break Secretarial Suspension Authorization](#)

b. Project #1823

White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health

California Deer Association

\$1,493,192

Mono County

The White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health project, proposed by the California Deer Association, will implement at least 412 acres of fuels-reduction treatments to improve forest health and the wildfire resilience of the town of Mammoth Lakes in Mono County. The project area lies directly northeast of the municipal boundary of Mammoth Lakes, between the town and Highway 395, and is located entirely within the Mammoth Ranger District on the Inyo National Forest and the boundary of the large-landscape Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP). The project is part of Phase 1 of the landscape-level ESCCRP, which covers approximately 50,000 acres surrounding Mammoth Lakes and focuses on improving forest health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience. White Fir Ridge is a critical piece of untreated acres within a strategically planned fuels-reduction corridor that connects Mammoth Lakes to Highway 395. The project will result in a more fire-resilient forest and reduced wildfire risk to the town of Mammoth Lakes, while also protecting critical infrastructure, wildlife habitat, cultural sites, and recreation access points.

CEQA Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Public Resources Code Section 4799.05, subd. (d)(1) for projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act, if the primary role of the state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. The project was reviewed in its entirety in the *Three Creeks Forest Health and Restoration Project Revised Environmental Assessment with Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact* signed in January 2018, and the *Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact with Decision Notice* signed in September 2024.

[Access the Project Details and Notice of Exemption \(Project #1823\)](#)

c. Project #1824

Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction

Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council

\$1,896,856

Madera County

The Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction project is led by the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council and will reconstruct an approximately 4.7-mile long, 300-acre fuel break, completing the Goat Mountain section of the Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break on Sierra National

Forest lands in eastern Madera County. This fuel break is located near Bass Lake and will help protect the communities of Oakhurst, Wishon, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, North Fork, and the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians. Combined with the neighboring Thornberry Mountain Fuel Break, there will be a 10-mile stretch of contiguous fuel break within the fuel-break network. The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians will conduct cultural monitoring on the project site and, once the current on-the-ground activities are complete, CAL FIRE has committed to future maintenance under a Good Neighbor Authority agreement. This is a priority project under the Madera County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as the Madera County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

CEQA Compliance: The project is statutorily exempt under Public Resources Code Section 4799.05, subd. (d)(1) for projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act, if the primary role of the state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. The project was reviewed in its entirety in the *Joint Chiefs Fuelbreak Project Decision Memo* signed in September 2019.

[Access the Project Details and Notice of Exemption \(Project #1824\)](#)

Next Steps

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

Staff will continue reviewing Statements of Interest and evaluating Proposals and will bring forward additional award recommendations to the March 2026 Board meeting. If the three grant awards recommended today are approved, a total of \$4,688,048 will have been awarded.

Due to the robust list of excellent projects, staff recommends the Board approve increasing the available funding for this Program, under the current Guidelines, from \$10 million to \$15 million (a \$5 million increase.)

This will leave \$15.904 million in remaining Proposition 4 Early Action Wildfire funds. Staff intend to develop a revised set of Guidelines for Board approval later this fiscal year to expand project eligibility to include critical forest health and wildfire-recovery projects that build resilience for communities, habitat, water supply, and other natural and Regional values.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board:

- a. Find that the Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break project (1816) falls under the suspension of state statutes, rules, regulations, and requirements that fall within the jurisdictions of the boards, departments, and offices within the CalEPA and the CNRA, (including, but not limited to, CEQA) pursuant to Governor Newsom's March 1, 2025 Proclamation; Authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,298,000 to Chico State Enterprises for the Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break project (1816) and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**
- b. Authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health project (1823), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,493,192 to the California Deer Association, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**
- c. Authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction project (1824), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,896,856 to the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.**
- d. Authorize an additional \$5 million (for a total of \$15 million) of the Proposition 4 Early Action Wildfire funding appropriated to the SNC in 2024-25 to the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program.**

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program SNC Project Number 1816

SNC ID Number: 1816

Applicant: Chico State Enterprises

Project Title: Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break

SNC Subregion: North Central

County(ies): Butte

Funding Amount Requested: \$1,298,000

Funding Amount Recommended: \$1,298,000

Total Project Cost: \$2,308,000

Funding Authority: Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, California Budget Act of 2024 (SB103 Early Action Wildfire)

Project Scope / Description

The Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break project will establish 6.5 miles of a 12.3 mile roadside fuel break on Musty Buck Ridge in the footprint of the 2024 Park Fire, enabling the application of large-scale, cross-boundary prescribed fire treatments in Big Chico Creek Canyon. Spanning a total of 680 acres, with SNC funding a minimum of 389 acres (6.5 miles) on public and private lands, the project will create a continuous fire-holding feature strategically protecting 105,000 residents in Cohasset, Forest Ranch, and the City of Chico in Butte County.

The fuel break will establish an average spacing of 40 feet between native trees and shrubs to reduce fuel continuity and wildfire intensity. The project will utilize light equipment to pluck out shrubs that easily resprout, equipment for felling and mastication, hand thinning, piling, and prescribed fire, as well as herbicide application. Cut fuels will be pile-burned or lopped and scattered based on proximity to the fuel break and fuel accumulations. This methodology was chosen for cost efficiency, project longevity (reduction of resprouts), and fuels reduction along a fuel break to support wildfire suppression and increasing the pace and scale of prescribed fire implementation. The project will protect the critical habitat of Big Chico Creek, home to spring-run Chinook salmon, and to multiple species including the Pacific fisher, Foothill yellow-legged frogs, and golden eagles. The project spans public

lands in Bidwell Park and the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve that serve over 500,000 visitors annually.

The project ties together existing, already-built fuel break segments with CAL FIRE Butte Unit's Iron Canyon Vegetation Management Plan on 8,261 acres, a key component of the Butte County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and the CAL FIRE Butte Unit Plan. In addition to immediate risk reduction, the fuel break will serve as a strategic staging area for future prescribed fire operations and improve access to a remote, high-risk ridge for wildfire response. It is the key holding feature required to support local tribal, nonprofit, and agency partners to implement the vision of regular, canyon-scale beneficial fire, which has been collaboratively developed. The SNC invested in several implementation projects within or near the current project before the Park Fire. They included: 1236 (250 acres), 1378 (150 acres on Musty Buck Ridge), and 1341 (441 acres). In addition, two SNC-funded planning projects, 1126 and 1225, developed forest-management plans and completed environmental compliance.

The Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve (BCCER) is under the direction of Chico State Enterprises, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation operating on behalf of California State University, Chico to advance the university's educational mission. The BCCER has a 25-year history of land management and provides nearly 8,000 acres of natural resources to support research and teaching. Other landowners within the SNC project footprint include the City of Chico's Bidwell Park at the southern end of the fuel break and Sierra Pacific Industries at the northern end.

This project brings together a broad coalition of supporters and stakeholders, including BCCER, the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria, City of Chico Fire Department, City of Chico Parks Division, CAL FIRE, Sierra Pacific Industries, Higgins Ridge LLC, Butte County Fire Safe Council, and the Butte County Resource Conservation District. The collaboration reflects a unified, landscape-scale approach to building wildfire resilience in the Big Chico Creek watershed with planning completed as a special task force under the Butte County Collaborative Group specifically looking at opportunities for management within the Park Fire footprint. The fuel break funding is leveraged by approximately \$110,000 in secured match (Chico Fire support-\$10,000, CAL FIRE FRAP contract-\$70,207, and CAL FIRE Forest Health grant-\$29,793).

The fuel break aligns with Proposition 4 and California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Plan, which prioritizes increasing the pace and scale of forest-health projects, strengthening protection of communities, and managing forests. The project will help prevent wildfire and reduce smoke impacts for disadvantaged communities in the City of Chico and the Big Chico Creek watershed. Approximately 4 percent of the project's budget will support the Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria, a vulnerable population, by

including tribal monitoring crews and staff as critical partners on the project and supported by an MOU and Master Services Agreement.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Task 1: Progress Reports	August 1 and February 1 throughout the duration of the project
Task 2: Complete contracts with Fuels Crews and Mechoopda Tribe.	February 28, 2026
Task 3: Monitoring with “before and after” pre-treatment and post-treatment photos.	February 2026 – February 2028
Task 4: Treatment totaling a 389-acre footprint of fuel reduction. Treatment minimums: 110 acres mechanical, 230 acres manual treatment, 301 acres pile burning, 75 acres herbicide. Some treatments overlap.	March 2026 – February 2028
Task 5: Implementation. Includes project site review, oversee crews and contractors, GPS acres, communicate with tribal monitors, and confirm compliance with environmental standards and treatment scope prior to payment of fuel-reduction contractors/crews. Monthly reviews and compliance.	March 2026 and continuing until – February 2028
Task 6: Administration of project tracking performance measures, preparing and submitting grant reports, facilitating partner meetings to ensure continued collaboration and success.	February 2026 – February 2028
Estimated Project Completion Date	February 1, 2028

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project and Fiscal Management	257,237
Materials and Supplies – fuel, PPE, signage	10,154
Implementation – Mechanical, pile burning, herbicide, manual treatments	809,305
Tribal Participation	52,000
Administrative Costs	169,304
Total	1,298,000

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- The Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria
- The City of Chico Parks Department
- CAL FIRE Butte Unit
- CAL FIRE Fire and Resource Assessment Program
- City of Chico Fire Department
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- Butte County Resource Conservation District
- Butte County Fire Safe Council
- Butte County Air Quality Management District
- Watershed Research and Training Center

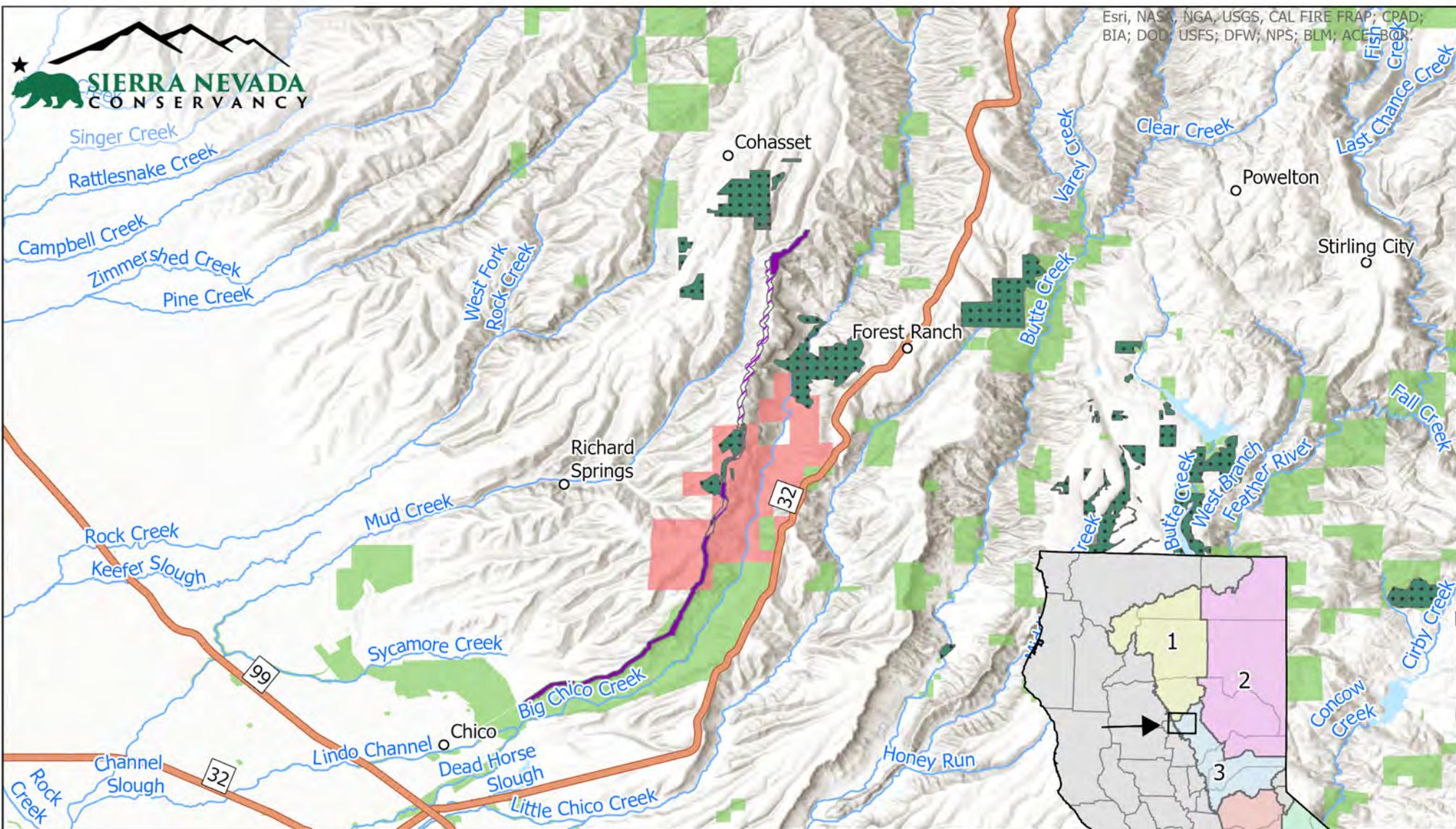
Opposition:

- 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 improved or restored



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, CAL FIRE FRAP; CPAD; BIA; DOD; USFS; DFW; NPS; BLM; ACE; BOR.

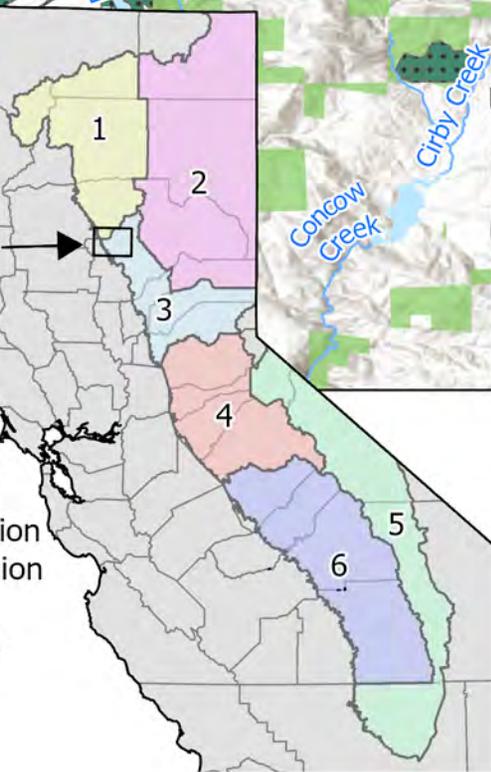
1816: Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break

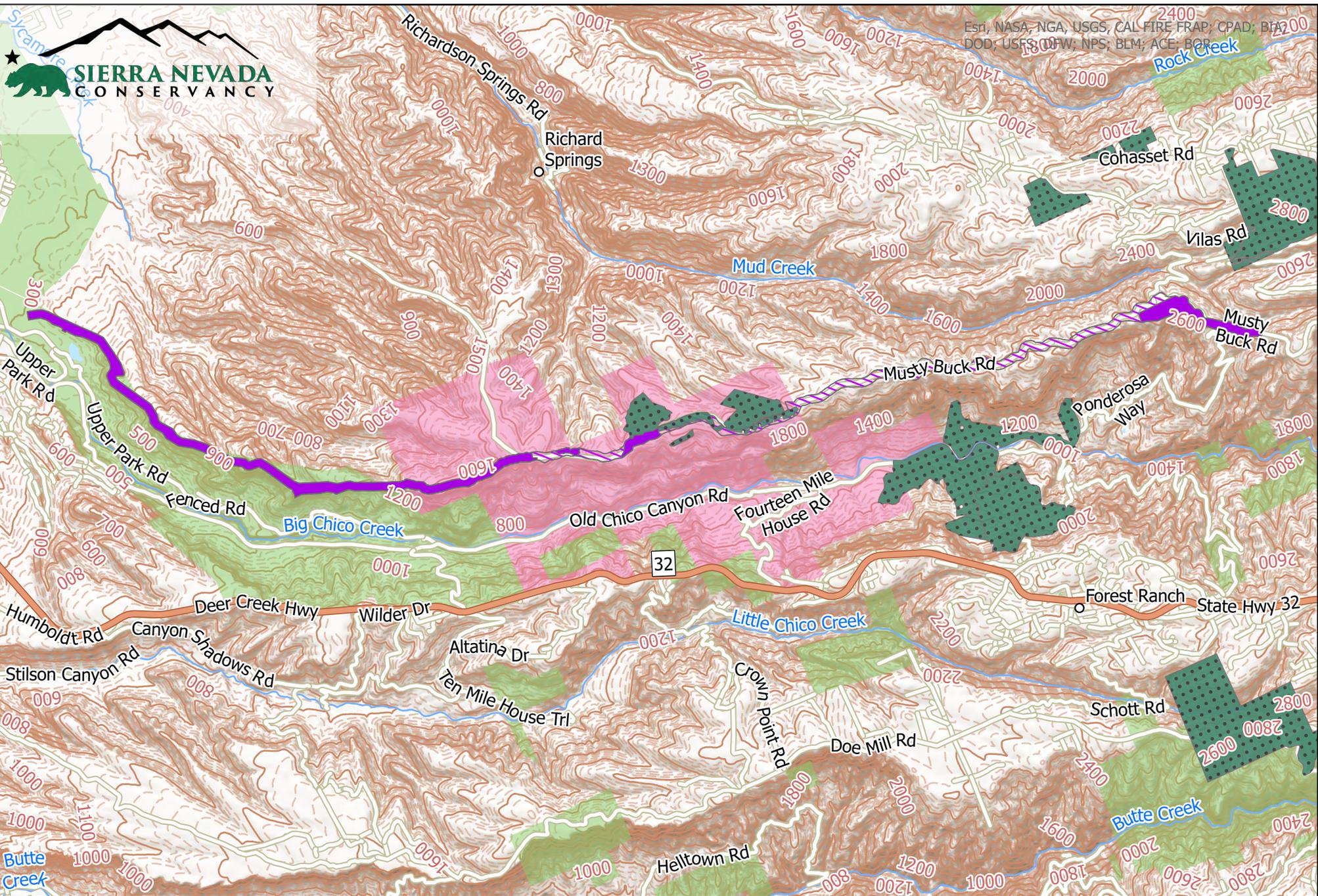
Chico State Enterprises

- SNC 1816
- Non-SNC funded portions of fuel break
- Other SNC implementation grants
- Public Lands
- Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve

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

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles



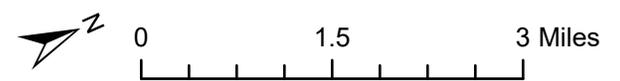


1816: Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break

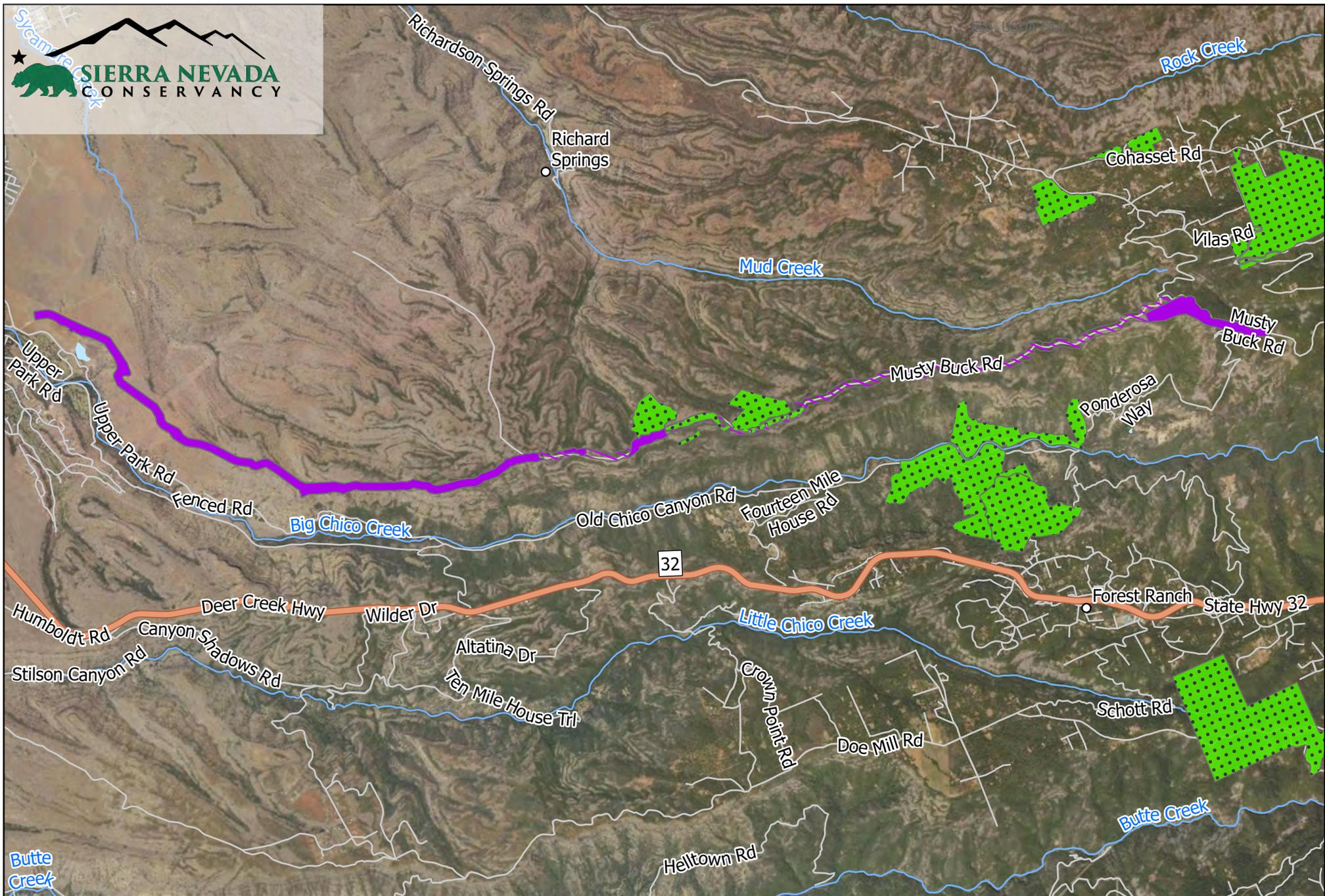
Chico State Enterprises

- SNC 1816
- Non-SNC funded portions of fuel break
- Other SNC Implementation Grants
- Public Lands
- Roads
- Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve

Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet



Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, CAL FIRE FRAP, CPAD, BIA, DOD, USFS, USFWS, NPS, BLM, ACE, BOR



1816: Musty Buck Ridge Fuel Break
 Chico State Enterprises

- SNC 1816
- Non-SNC funded portions of fuel break
- Other SNC Implementation Grants
- Roads

Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet

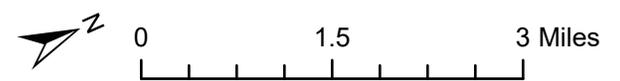


Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program SNC Project Number 1823

SNC ID Number: 1823

Applicant: California Deer Association

Project Title: White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health

SNC Subregion: Southeast

County(ies): Mono

Funding Amount Requested: \$1,493,192

Funding Amount Recommended: \$1,493,192

Total Project Cost: \$1,615,553

Funding Authority: Proposition 4, The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, California Budget Act of 2024 (SB103 Early Action Wildfire)

Project Scope / Description

The White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health project, as proposed by California Deer Association (CDA), will implement at least 412 acres of fuels-reduction treatments to improve forest health and community wildfire resilience of the town of Mammoth Lakes in Mono County. The project area lies directly northeast of the municipal boundary of Mammoth Lakes, between it and Highway 395, and is located entirely within the Mammoth Ranger District on the Inyo National Forest (INF). The project is within the Hot Creek – Owens River watershed and the boundary of the large-landscape Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP).

Current conditions of the project area include high tree density, tree mortality, and surface fuel loads, which in the event of an ignition would likely result in high-severity wildfire that would threaten the safety of the community and the stability of forest ecosystems.

Because of these conditions, and the location of the project, it has been identified as a priority for INF and in the Mono County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This project will treat 412 acres via conifer and understory thinning, which will reduce hazardous fuel loads, protect local communities and critical infrastructure, and establish the conditions necessary for the safe reintroduction of prescribed fire to restore natural fire regimes.

These outcomes will be achieved by implementing 91 acres of conifer thinning using mechanical treatments and 321 acres of understory thinning using hand-crew treatments.

The project is within Phase 1 of the landscape-level ESCCRP, which covers approximately 50,000 acres surrounding Mammoth Lakes and focuses on improving forest health, community wildfire preparedness, and fire resilience. White Fir Ridge is a critical piece of untreated acres within a strategically planned fuels-reduction corridor that connects Mammoth Lakes to Highway 395. This project is adjacent to several other projects planned and underway as part of Phase 1 of the ESCCRP, including projects previously funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) at Inyo Craters and Reds Meadow.

The CDA is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization that has been dedicated to supporting and protecting wildlife, communities, and ecosystems through forest health and resilience projects for 30 years. The CDA and INF, the land manager for White Fir Ridge, have partnered on a variety of restoration projects that focus on forest and watershed health, fuels reduction, wildlife-habitat enhancement, and health and human safety. The CDA is currently managing multiple SNC grants, including grant #1571, a nearby forest-health project at Inyo Craters.

The CDA's primary partner for the project is INF, who will provide implementation oversight support, sensitive cultural resource protection, and project administration. The Bishop Paiute Tribe is another key project partner who will provide cultural monitoring and/or hand-crew work with its Tribal Stewardship Crew. Other project partners include Whitebark Institute and Sierra Institute who will provide support roles in community outreach and tribal participation. The CDA and INF are both contributing secured in-kind funding for the project for staff time and travel expenses.

The White Fir Ridge project supports the SNC Strategic Plan and Proposition 4 by completing strategically located hazardous fuel-reduction treatments that are designed to lower fire intensity, slow fire spread, and create safer ingress/egress for public and firefighters. This will result in a more fire-resilient forest and reduced wildfire risk to the town of Mammoth Lakes, while also protecting critical infrastructure, wildlife habitat, cultural sites, and recreation access points.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
SNC Progress Reports	August 1 and February 1 throughout the duration of the project
Contracting for Conifer and Understory Thinning	April 2026 – June 2027
Implementation of Conifer and Understory Thinning	May 2026 – November 2027
Project Wrap up, SNC Final Report	November 2027 – January 2028
Estimated Project Completion Date	February 1, 2028

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project Implementation – Conifer and Understory Thinning	\$ 1,170,900
Project Management – CDA and USFS	\$ 96,448
Tribal Participation	\$ 31,080
Administrative Costs	\$ 194,764
Total	\$ 1,493,192

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- USDA Forest Service, Inyo National Forest
- Bishop Paiute Tribe
- Whitebark Institute
- Sierra Institute
- Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District
- Town of Mammoth Lakes
- Mono County Board of Supervisors
- Eastern Sierra Council of Governments
- Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
- Ormat Technologies
- California Trout, Sierra Headwaters Region

- Wildlands Network

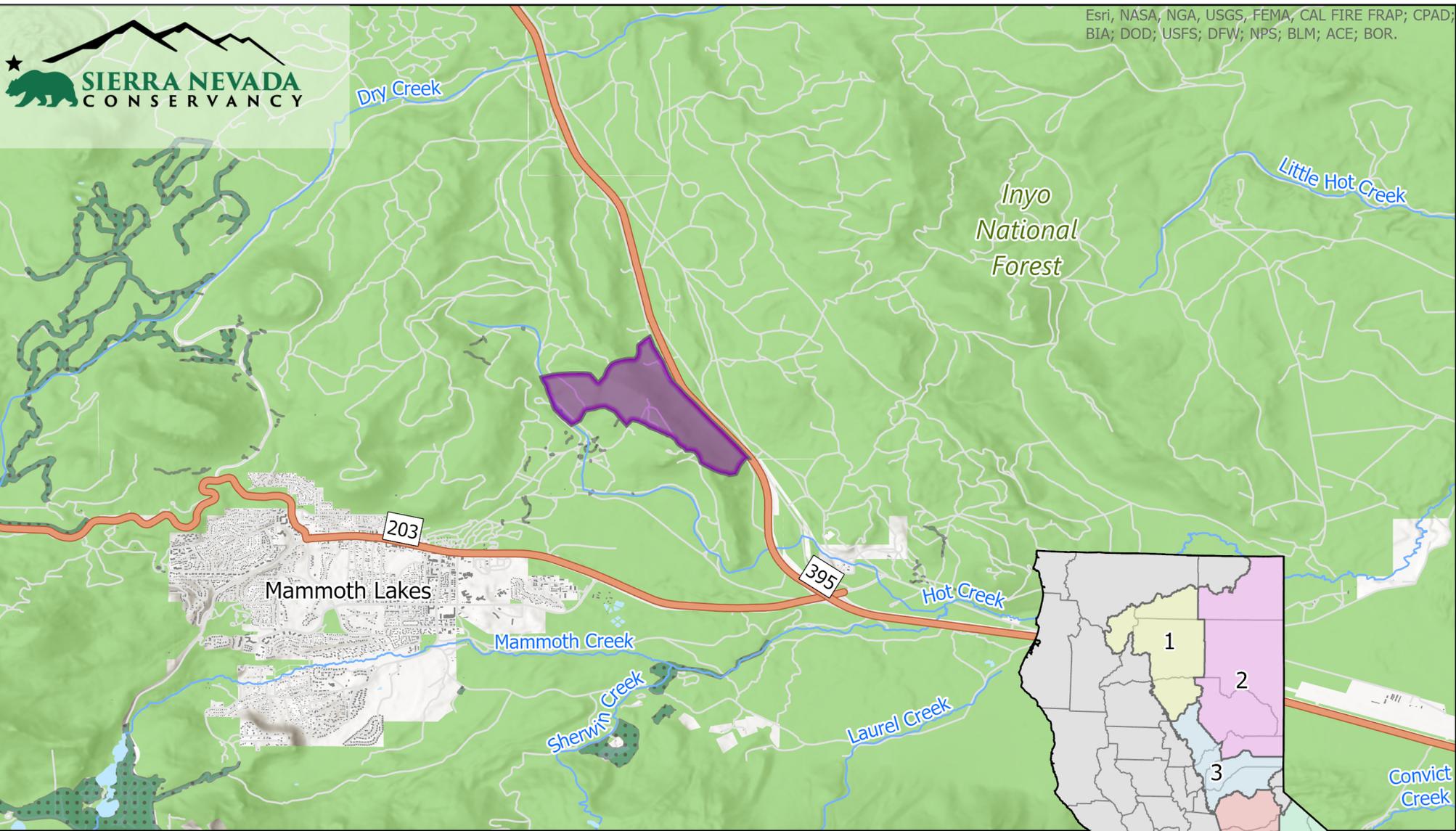
Opposition:

- 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.

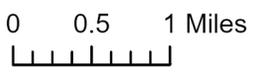
- Acres of Land Improved or Restored



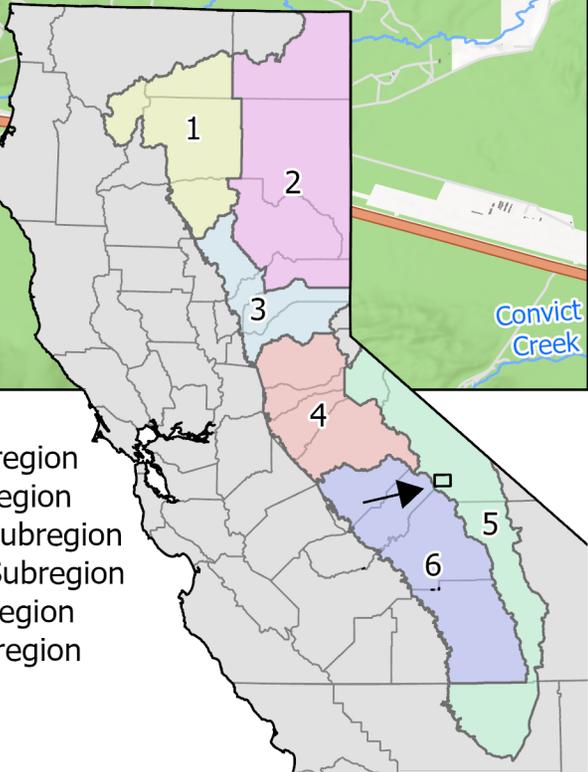
Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, CAL FIRE FRAP; CPAD; BIA; DOD; USFS; DFW; NPS; BLM; ACE; BOR.

1823: White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health
California Deer Association

- 1823
- Public Lands
- Other SNC implementation grants

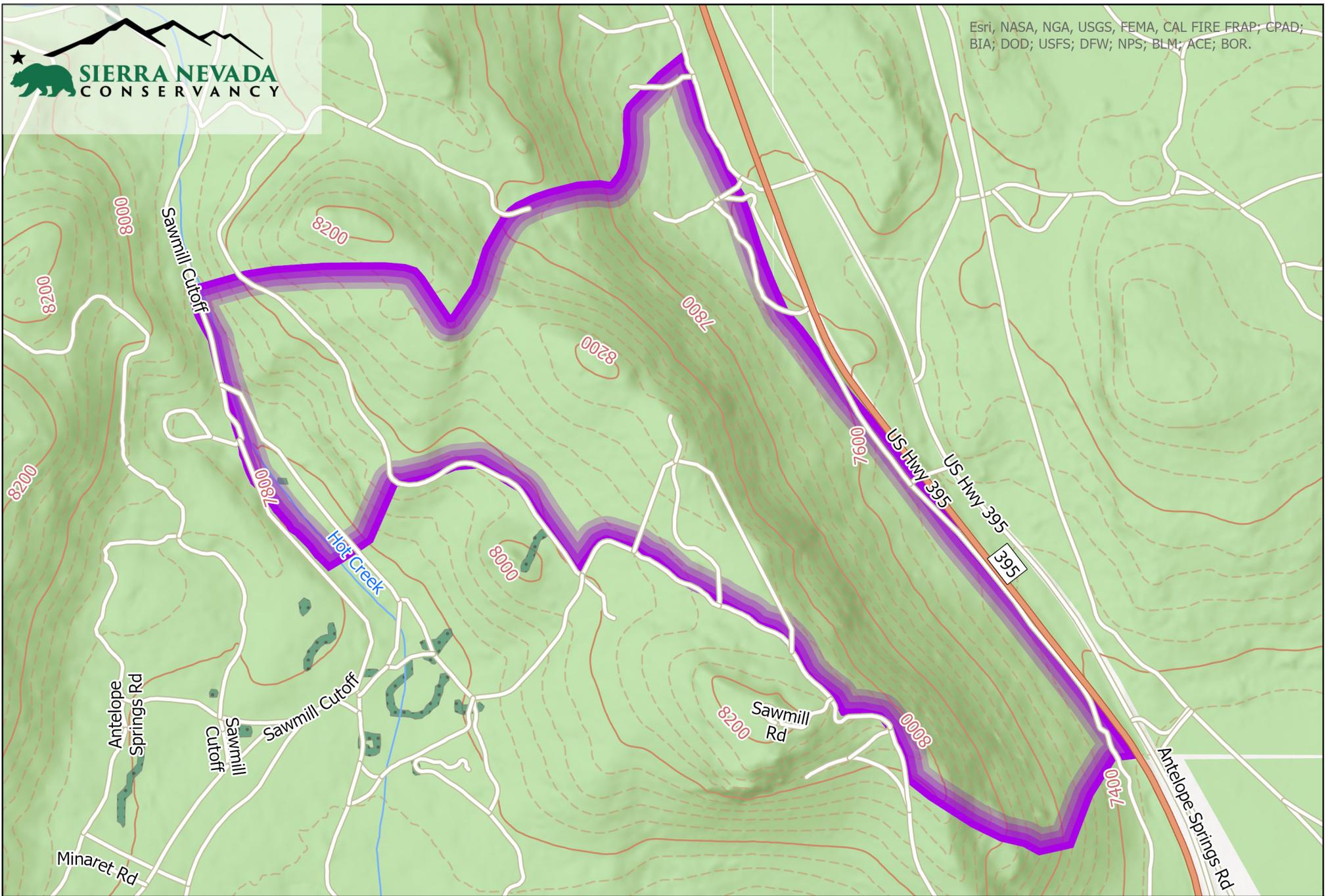


1. Northwest Subregion
2. Northeast Subregion
3. North Central Subregion
4. South Central Subregion
5. Southeast Subregion
6. Southwest Subregion





Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, CAL FIRE FRAP; CPAD; BIA; DOD; USFS; DFW; NPS, BLM; ACE; BOR.

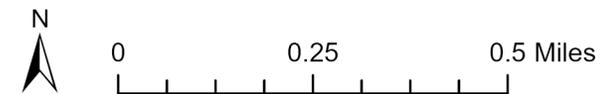


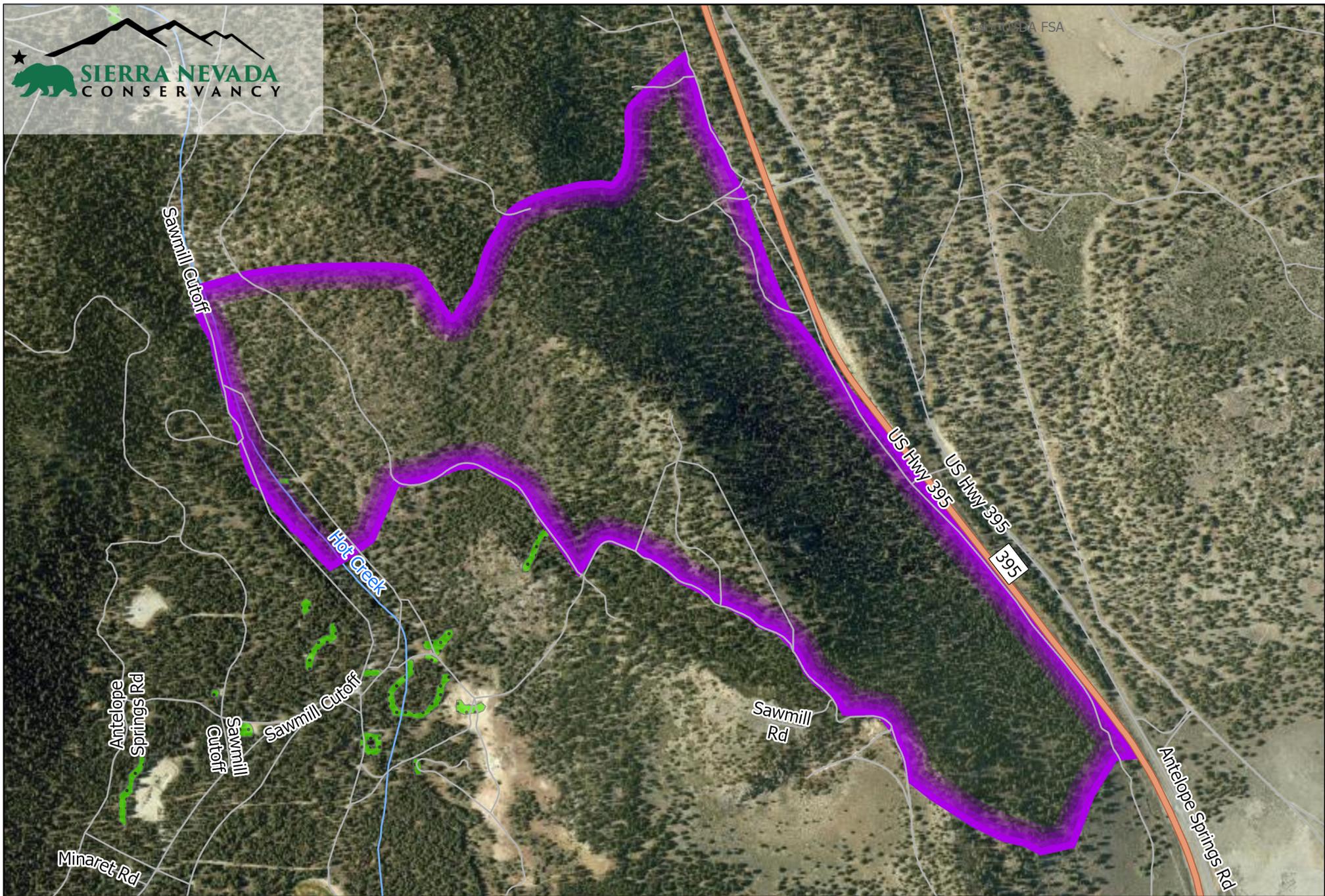
1823: White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health

California Deer Association

- 1823
- Other SNC Implementation Grants
- Public Lands

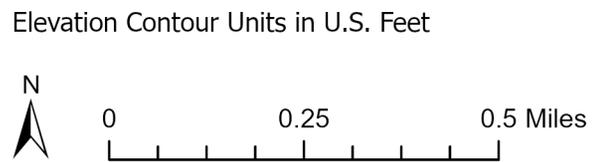
Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet





1823: White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health
California Deer Association

- 1823
- Other SNC Implementation Grants
- Roads



To: Governor’s Office of Land Use and
Climate Innovation
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

To: Mono County Clerk - Recorder
74 N. School Street, Annex I
PO Box 237
Bridgeport, CA 93517

Project Title: White Fir Ridge Fuels Reduction and Forest Health (SNC1823)

Project Location – Specific: Directly northeast of the municipal boundary of Mammoth Lakes, between the town and Highway 395, and is located entirely within the Mammoth Ranger District on the Inyo National Forest. Project center at approximately 37.664822, -118.936900.

Project Location - City: Mammoth Lakes

Project Location - County: Mono

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would provide funding for the California Deer Association to partner with the United States Forest Service, Inyo National Forest, to implement fuels-reduction activities on Inyo National Forest lands, adjacent to the Town of Mammoth Lakes. Current conditions of the project area include high tree density, tree mortality, and surface fuel loads, which in the event of an ignition would likely result in high-severity wildfire that would threaten the safety of the community and the stability of forest ecosystems. This project will treat at least 412 acres via conifer and understory thinning, which will reduce hazardous fuel loads, protect local communities and critical infrastructure, and establish the conditions necessary for the safe reintroduction of prescribed fire to restore natural fire regimes. These outcomes will be achieved by implementing approximately 91 acres of conifer thinning using mechanical treatments and 321 acres of understory thinning using hand-crew treatments.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Project Applicant / Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:
California Deer Association
Lauren Archer, Habitat Program Manager
1884 Keystone Court Suite A
Redding, CA 96003

530-515-8893
larcher@caldeer.org

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemption: Pub. Resources Code, section 4799.05, subd. (d)(1)

Reasons why project is exempt: Public Resources Code, section 4799.05 statutorily exempts from CEQA projects for prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel-reduction projects, or to related activities included in the project description, undertaken, in whole or in part, on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) if the primary role of a state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. The SNC has authorized/approved the use of the funding for the California Deer Association to work in partnership with the Inyo National Forest to conduct fuels-reduction treatments on National Forest lands. The project was reviewed in its entirety under NEPA by the Inyo National Forest in the *Three Creeks Forest Health and Restoration Project Revised Environmental Assessment*, with a *Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact* signed on January 25, 2018, as well as in the *Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact* with *Decision Notice* signed on September 19, 2024.

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.

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program SNC Project Number 1824

SNC ID Number: 1824

Applicant: Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council

Project Title: Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction

SNC Subregion: Southwest

County(ies): Madera

Funding Amount Requested: \$1,896,856

Funding Amount Recommended: \$1,896,856

Total Project Cost: \$1,996,856

Funding Authority: Proposition 4, The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, California Budget Act of 2024 (SB103 Early Action Wildfire)

Project Scope / Description

The Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction project is led by the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council and will reconstruct an approximately 4.7-mile long, 300-acre fuel break, completing the Goat Mountain section of the Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break on Sierra National Forest lands in eastern Madera County. This fuel break is located near Bass Lake and will help protect the communities of Oakhurst, Wishon, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, North Fork, and the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians.

Utilizing a combination of hand treatments, mechanical treatments, and pile burning, the project will reconstruct 300 acres of ridgetop fuel break making this an effective component of the larger Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break network. The North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians will conduct cultural monitoring on the project site and, once the current on-the-ground activities are complete, CAL FIRE has committed to future maintenance under a Good Neighbor Authority agreement. This is a priority project under the Madera County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as the Madera County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Directly adjacent to this project is the 5.7-mile long, Thornberry Fuel Break, another component of the same fuel break network. Combined with the Goat Mountain Fuel Break, they will create an approximate 10-mile stretch of buffer. CAL FIRE has committed to

conducting similar maintenance on the Thornberry Fuel Break, so the two projects may act as a contiguous fuel break.

The Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to wildfire protection, education, and fuels reduction. The organization has led other forest-resilience projects across eastern Madera County, including fuel break construction, defensible space programs, and community outreach initiatives. They are a current Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program (RFFCP) grantee through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC).

The Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council will partner with the Sierra National Forest to complete the project, as the project takes place on the Bass Lake Ranger District. Other partners include the Madera-Mariposa-Merced unit of CAL FIRE for maintenance and stewardship, the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians for monitoring, and the Fire Adapted Madera County Collaborative. The project is close to the Wishon Dam and the Crane Valley hydroelectric plant, and PG&E has made a \$100,000 contribution to the project.

This project supports the SNC Strategic Plan by maintaining healthy forests and protecting communities in the Sierra-Cascade from wildfire, while also increasing partner capacity to conduct future regional projects. This project is adjacent to the Wishon Reservoir and associated infrastructure and is in the San Joaquin River watershed.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Complete six-month progress reports	August 1 and February 1 throughout the duration of the project
Conduct surveys, release requests for proposals (RFPs), and execute contractual agreements	January 2026 – June 2026
Conduct hand and mechanical thinning	June 2026 – December 2027
Conduct pile burning and/or utilize biomass facility	November 2026 – December 2027
Project documentation and wrap-up	January 2028 – April 2028
SNC Final Report with performance measure reporting	March 2028
Estimated Project Completion Date	April 2028

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project Management	\$75,040
Project Contracting	\$1,488,500
Travel	\$1,050
Supplies	\$850
Tribal Participation	\$84,000
Administrative Costs	\$247,416
Total	\$1,896,856

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- Madera-Mariposa-Merced unit of CAL FIRE
- Coarsegold Resource Conservation District
- PG&E
- Madera County
- North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians

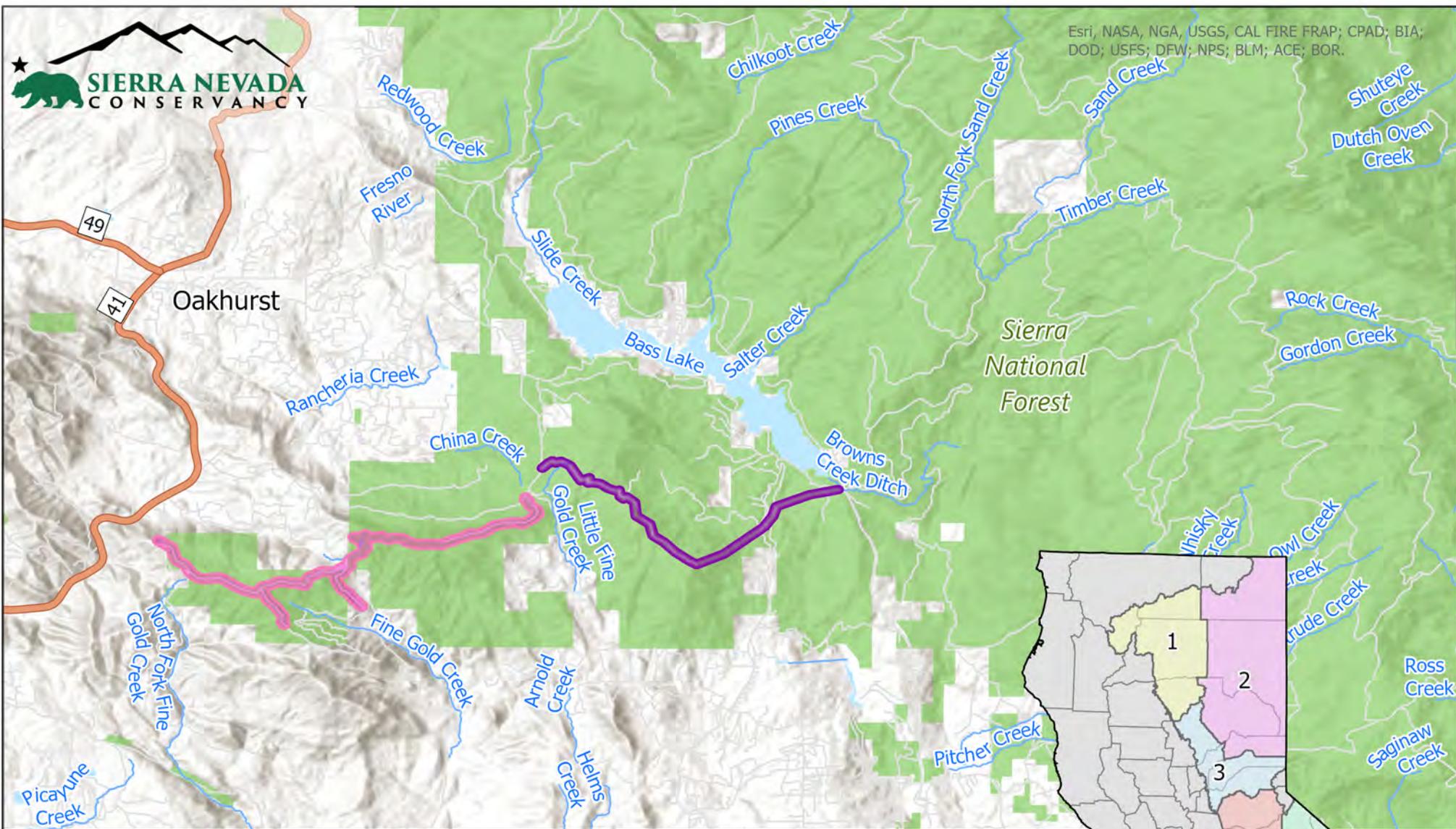
Opposition:

- 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 improved or restored

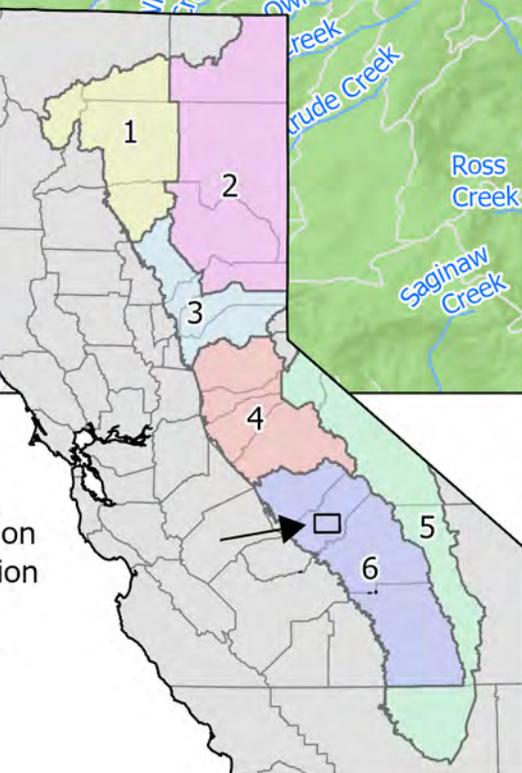
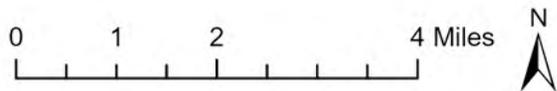


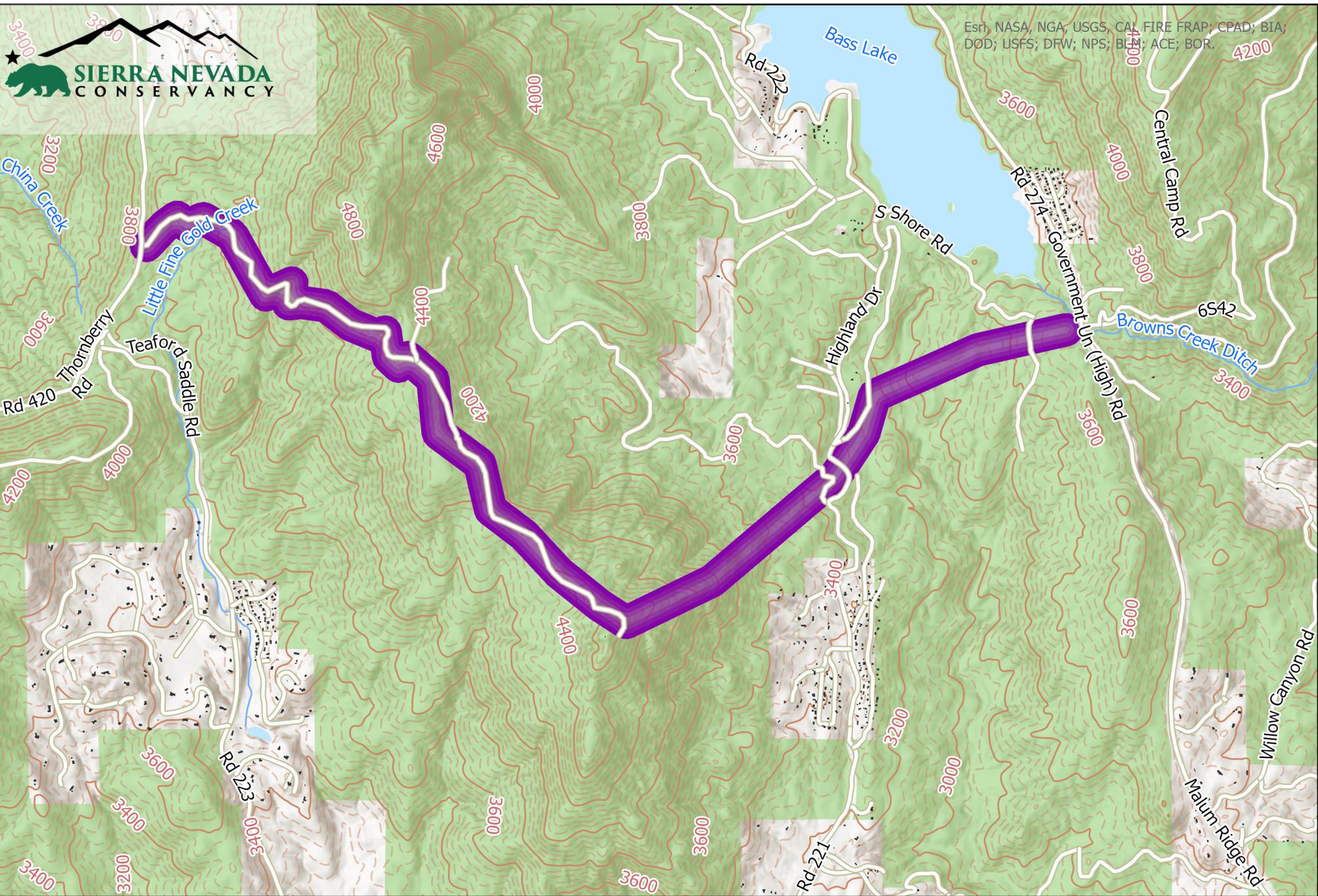
1824: Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction

Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council

-  Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction
-  Completed Fuel Break
-  Public Lands

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



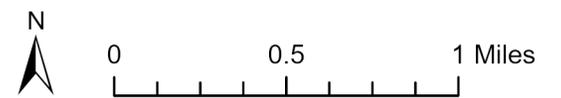


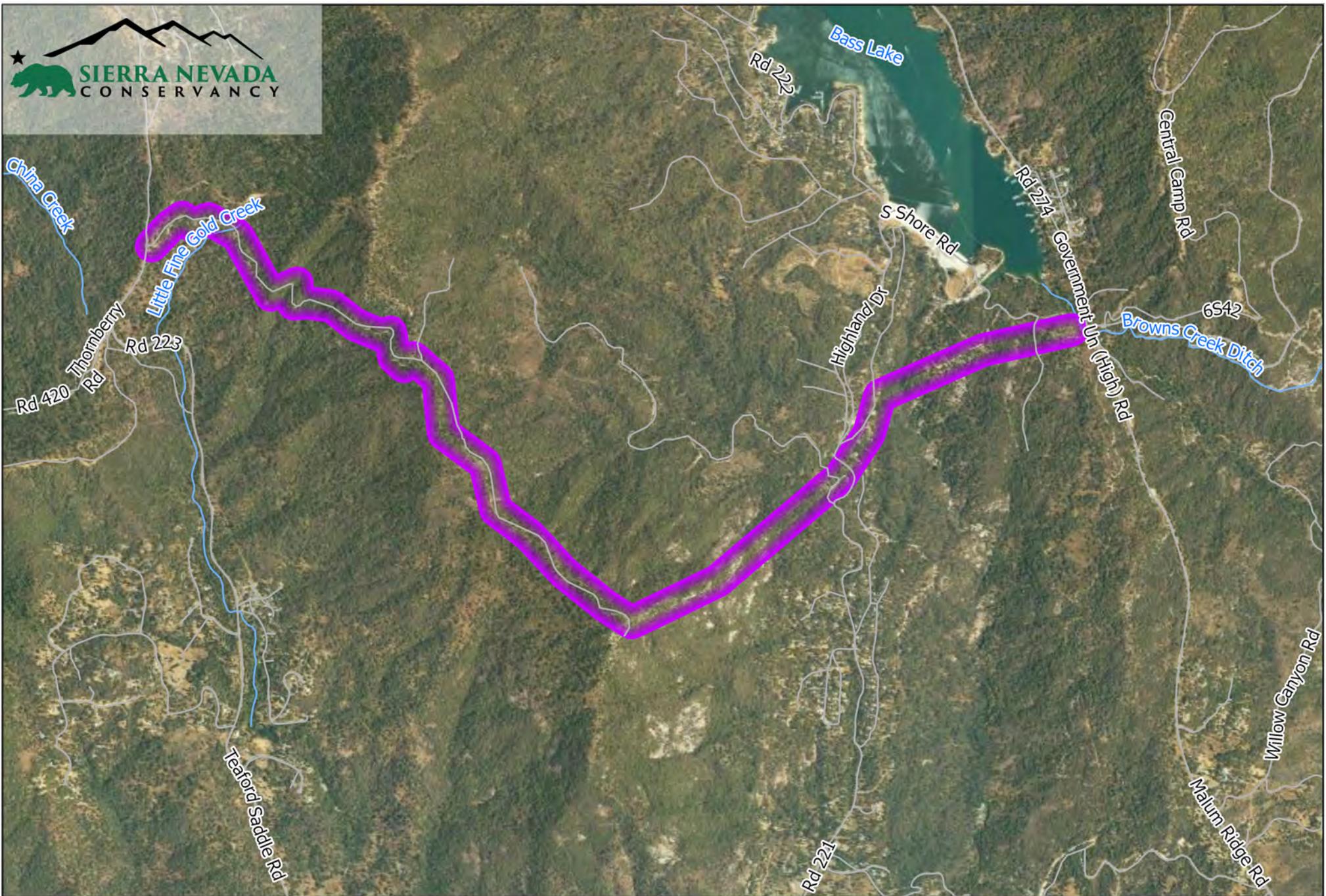
1824: Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction

Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council

- Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction
- Buildings
- Roads
- Public Lands

Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet



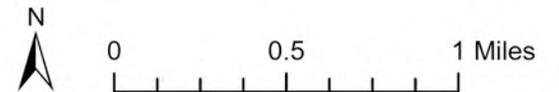


1824: Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction

Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council

 Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction
 Roads

Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet



To: Governor's Office of Land Use and
Climate Innovation
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

To: Madera County Clerk - Recorder
200 W. 4th Street
Madera, CA 93637

Project Title: Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction (SNC1824)

Project Location – Specific: 4.7-mile long, east-west fuel break, completing the Goat Mountain section of the Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break on Sierra National Forest lands in eastern Madera County. Eastern boundary of the project is the southern end of Bass Lake, Rd 274. Western boundary of the project is Rd 223. Project center at approximately 37.2859, -19.5583

Project Location - City: South of Wishon

Project Location - County: Madera

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would provide funding for the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council to partner with the United States Forest Service, Sierra National Forest, to reconstruct a 4.7-mile-long, east-west fuel break on Sierra National Forest lands, just south of Bass Lake. The Goat Mountain Fuel Break Reconstruction project will complete the Goat Mountain section of the Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break, connecting with the eastern end of the Thornberry Fuel Break. Combined with the neighboring Thornberry Fuel Break, there will be a 10-mile stretch of contiguous fuel break within the fuel-break network. Treatments used will include hand treatments, mechanical treatments, and pile burning over approximately 300 acres. All work will be completed compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion Decision Memo for the *Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break Project* signed in September 2019. The fuel break will help protect the communities of Oakhurst, Bass Lake, Coarsegold, North Fork, and the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians. This is a priority project under the Madera County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as the Madera County Community Wildfire Protection plan.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

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

Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council
Ashley Nebeker, Executive Director
50286 Barcus Circle
Coarsegold, CA 93614

559-917-7370
info@easternmaderacountyfiresafecouncil.com

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemption: Pub. Resources Code, section 4799.05, subd. (d)(1)

Reasons why project is exempt: Public Resources Code, section 4799.05 statutorily exempts from CEQA projects for prescribed fire, reforestation, habitat restoration, thinning, or fuel-reduction projects, or to related activities included in the project description, undertaken, in whole or in part, on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) if the primary role of a state or local agency is providing funding or staffing for those projects. The SNC has authorized/approved the use of funding for the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council to work in partnership with the Sierra National Forest to reconstruct a fuel break on National Forest lands. The project was reviewed in its entirety under NEPA by the Sierra National Forest in the *FY19 Joint Chiefs' Fuel Break Project* Categorical Exclusion Decision Memo signed on September 19, 2019.

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.

Agenda Item 11: Grant Agreement Amendment Recommendations

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board makes grant awards for specific projects and authorizes SNC staff to enter into grant agreements to implement those projects. As projects progress, there is often the need to amend grant agreements to make needed adjustments to various aspects of the projects. The SNC executive officer has delegated authority from the Governing Board to amend and modify the terms of grant agreements under specific circumstances. However, if a grantee has requested a substantive change to the scope, deliverables, and/or purpose of a grant, or if the requested changes are subject to and not exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), then the SNC Governing Board must authorize such amendments.

Current Status

There are currently two projects for which staff are recommending the Board approve amendments to the grant agreements.

a. Project #1547

Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project

Butte County Fire Safe Council
\$999,636
Butte County

Original Project

In June 2023, the SNC Governing Board authorized a grant to the Butte County Fire Safe Council (BCFSC) for 1547 Magalia Forest Resilience Project in the amount of \$999,636. The SNC Governing Board determined the project was categorically exempt from the conditions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under California Code of Regulations, tit.14, section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land, for minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic, trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes.

The original project planned to treat 262 acres of unburned forests to protect the local community and water resources, including Paradise Lake, Magalia Reservoir, and tributaries to Butte Creek. Treatments were to include mastication, hand cut, chip and pile burn, broadcast burning, and grazing. The project was developed in consultation with the

United States Forest Service, CAL FIRE, Butte County, Paradise Recreation and Park District (PRPD) and private landowners, and is part of the CAL FIRE Butte Unit Plan/Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Recommended Amendment

An amendment is being requested because, after the Camp Fire cleanup was completed, PRPD's Coutolenc Park was reevaluated by a California Prescribed Fire Burn Boss and it was determined that only six acres would burn effectively. The originally planned acreage in Coutolenc Park was 82 acres. The BCFSC has identified additional parcels owned by PRPD that meet the project acreage targets, maintain the partnership between BCFSC and PRPD and align with the originally proposed project goals.

The three parcels that will be added to the project are:

- PRPD Noble Park: 10 acres
 - APN: 050-230-060-000 and 050-230-082-000
 - Vegetation: Grass, Blackberry, Star Thistle, Ponderosa Pines
 - Treatments: Broadcast Burn
- PRPD Oak Creek: 12 acres
 - APN: 054-220-060-000 and 054-210-001-000
 - Vegetation: Broom, Blackberry, Ceanothus, Bush Poppy, Bay Laurel, Oaks, Ponderosa Pines
 - Treatments: Grazing; Hand Cut and Pile Burn; Broadcast Burn; Lop and Scatter.
- Adjacent Parcel to PRPD Oak Creek: 5 acres
 - APN: 054-210-005-000
 - Treatments: Grazing; Hand Cut and Pile Burn; Lop and Scatter.

CEQA Compliance

On September 20, 2022, the Town of Paradise Planning Commission, as Lead Agency under CEQA, certified and adopted the Paradise Fuels Reduction Project and Programmatic Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration. On September 23, 2022, the Town of Paradise filed its Notice of Determination with the Office of Planning and Research State Clearinghouse. On November 3, 2025, the Town of Paradise, by way of addendum, found that its activity would not result in new effects or require new mitigation measures, and approved the activity as being within the scope of the Final IS/MND and no further environmental review is required. (See November 3, 2025, Memorandum from Susan Hartman, Community Development Director, Planning and Wastewater, Town of Paradise.)

Before reaching a decision on the project, as a Responsible Agency under CEQA, the SNC Governing Board must independently consider the environmental effects of the project. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15096, subd. (f).¹)

Prior to approving the project, the SNC Governing Board must certify that it independently reviewed and considered the information in the Addendum and Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration. (CEQA Guidelines, §15050, subd. (b).)

The SNC is not proposing to add mitigation measures as conditions of approval. Thus, no additional mitigation monitoring and reporting plan is required to be adopted by the Governing Board prior to its decision on the project.

The SNC may file a Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency on the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration.

[Access the SNC Project Amendment Details \(Project #1547\)](#)

[Access the Town of Paradise Planning Commission's Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration.](#)

[Access the Town of Paradise Planning Commission's Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration Addendum \(November 3, 2025, Town of Paradise Memorandum.\)](#)

[Access the Town of Paradise Planning Commission's Notice of Determination as Lead Agency.](#)

[Access the SNC Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency \(Project #1547\)](#)

b. Project #1431-LC

Veater / Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Project

Sierra Foothill Conservancy

\$102,350

Madera County

Original Project

In March 2023, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board authorized a grant to the Sierra Foothill Conservancy (SFC) in the amount of \$102,350 for the Veater Ranch Conservation Easement Development Project. The SNC Governing Board determined the project was statutorily exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies (See also Pub. Resource Code, § 21102), and categorically

¹ Regulations implementing the California Environmental Quality Act, (hereafter CEQA Guidelines) are found under Title 14 California Code of Regulations.

exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines, Section 15306: Information Collection. The grant was to support planning and due-diligence activities towards a potential future conservation easement acquisition of the Veater parcels, owned by the George and Tara Veater Living Trust, across 2,165 acres in Coarsegold, CA, in Madera County. Specific deliverables included producing a Mineral Remoteness Opinion, a Phase One Environmental Site Assessment, appraisal, baseline conditions report, monitoring plan, title report review and resolution, draft agreement for the transaction, and a draft conservation easement. During the appraisal process it became clear the landowner required a minimum easement value to continue with the transaction. The appraised value did not meet the landowner's expectations, and they ultimately decided not to move forward with the transaction.

Recommended Amendment

The SFC has requested an amendment to the grant, substituting the existing Veater project for planning and due-diligence activities toward a different potential future donated conservation easement in the same focus area and adjacent to the same suite of conserved lands. Instead of the Veater Ranch, the SFC proposes to work towards a potential future conservation easement on the 1,063-acre Ekarnas Hemman property. The Ekarnas Hemman parcel has similar conservation values as the previous parcel and is located adjacent to the same set of already conserved lands. The owner of the new parcel has offered to contribute to project costs by funding the Mineral Remoteness Option, Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, and the appraisal. This contribution will make the acquisition of a conservation easement on the Ekarnas Hemman parcel possible without needing to change the project's budget from what remains of the already funded grant amount. The owner is exploring opportunities to potentially donate the conservation easement to the SFC, once due diligence is complete.

The SFC proposes this change by utilizing unspent funds in the agreement, leveraging generous landowner donations, and without otherwise changing the total grant award amount. Of the original \$102,350 award, there is \$73,533.22 remaining. Funds were expended in the completion of tasks related to the original Veater acquisition; namely conducting an appraisal, title resolution, and creating a draft easement. The current agreement expires February 15, 2027.

CEQA Compliance

This project is statutorily exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines, Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning studies (See also Pub. Resources Code, § 21102.), and categorically exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines, Section 15306: Information Collection

[Access the Project Amendment Details and Notice of Exemption \(Project #1431-LC\)](#)

Next Steps

Upon authorization by the Board, staff will file all adopted CEQA documentation, prepare amendments for each authorized grant agreement, and the grantees will proceed with the projects under the amended grant agreements.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board:

- a. (1) Certify that it independently reviewed and considered the information in the Paradise Fuels Reduction Programmatic Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration (2022) and Addendum.**

(2) If the Board concurs with the Paradise Fuels Reduction Programmatic Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration (2022) and Addendum, authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Determination as a responsible agency for the Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project (1547) amendment, approve the revised project scope per the Exhibit A, and authorize staff to amend the grant agreement with the Butte County Fire Safe Council.
- b. Authorize the executive officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Veater / Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Project (1431-LC) amendment, approve the revised project scope per the Exhibit A, and authorize staff to amend the grant agreement with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy.**

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program SNC Project Number 1547

SNC ID Number: 1547

Applicant: Butte County Fire Safe Council

Project Title: Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project

SNC Subregion: North Central

County(ies): Butte

Funding Amount Requested: \$999,636

Funding Amount Recommended: \$999,636

Total Project Cost: \$1,500,636

Funding Authority: California Budget Act of 2021

Project Scope / Description

The Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project (Project), led by Butte County Fire Safe Council (BCFSC), is located on private lands in Butte County, in the communities of Magalia and Paradise. The project is in the foothills east of Chico and will treat 221 acres of unburned forests that protect water resources, including Paradise Lake, Magalia Reservoir, and tributaries to Butte Creek and Dry Creek.

The Project will thin overstocked stands with the goal of achieving 70 percent canopy cover for watershed health and community safety. The 221-acre Project footprint includes multiple overlapping treatments that result in a total of 396 treatment acres and includes mastication, hand cut/chip, hand cut/pile burn, lop and scatter, broadcast burning, and grazing. The Project is part of a larger plan of the CAL FIRE Butte Unit Plan/Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that includes the following partners: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, Sierra Pacific Industries, Fire Safe Councils, BCFSC, Butte County Resource Conservation Service, and Butte County Public Works.

The Project connects landscape-level, forest-resilience efforts in and around Magalia, including completed Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) grants #474, #480, #846, and #1024. Additional treatments in the area have been funded by the American Forest Foundation (AFF) and CAL FIRE.

The BCFSC has extensive experience managing grants, including 13 SNC grants over a dozen years. The BCFSC has successfully implemented 135 grants for forest health, watershed protection, pre-fire education, and fuel reduction. The Project will be carried out on private lands by BCFSC staff and hired crews, in addition to volunteers and partner organizations.

The Project has been developed in consultation with the United States Forest Service, CAL FIRE, Butte County, and project landowners. Additional partners include Mooretown Rancheria, Paradise Recreation and Park District, and the Paradise Irrigation District. The Project leverages \$501,000 in matching funds that includes \$1,000 from CAL FIRE for technical assistance and \$500,000 from CAL FIRE's CCI Forest Health Grant Program.

The Project aligns with SNC's emphasis on increasing coordination and integration at the regional and watershed levels through numerous partnerships. It complements multiple goals outlined by California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, including: 1) Strengthening protection of communities from more frequent, larger, high-severity wildfires, 2) Protecting, conserving, and restoring the region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources by reducing forest stand density to improve forest-health conditions, 3) Protecting and improving water and air quality by increasing available water, and 4) Reducing risk of natural disasters, such as wildfire.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Progress Reports	Every six months
Contracting with Crews	October 2023
Photo Monitoring – Pre- and Post-Treatment	August 2023 – December 2027
Implementation of Thinning and Fuels Reduction on 396 Acres	September 2023 – December 2027
Project Oversight – Crews, Mapping, Compliance	September 2023 – December 2027
Tribal Participation	September 2023 – December 2027
Firewise USA Education – Tour, Online Newsletter, Website Posting	September 2026
Estimated Project Completion Date	January 1, 2028

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
Project and Fiscal Management	\$207,447
Contractual – Mastication, Prescribed Fire, Grazing, Hand Thinning and Chipping, Pile Burning, Grazing, Forester, Surveys	\$630,240
Travel and Supplies	\$16,562
Tribal Participation	\$15,000
Administrative Costs	\$130,387
Total	\$999,636

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- Butte County Department of Development Services as CEQA Lead Agency
- American Forest Foundation
- Mooretown Rancheria of Maidu Indians of California
- Butte County Water and Resource Conservation Department

- CAL FIRE, Butte Unit
- Paradise Recreation and Park District
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- Butte County Public Works Department
- Paradise Irrigation District

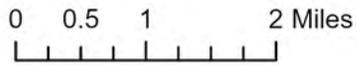
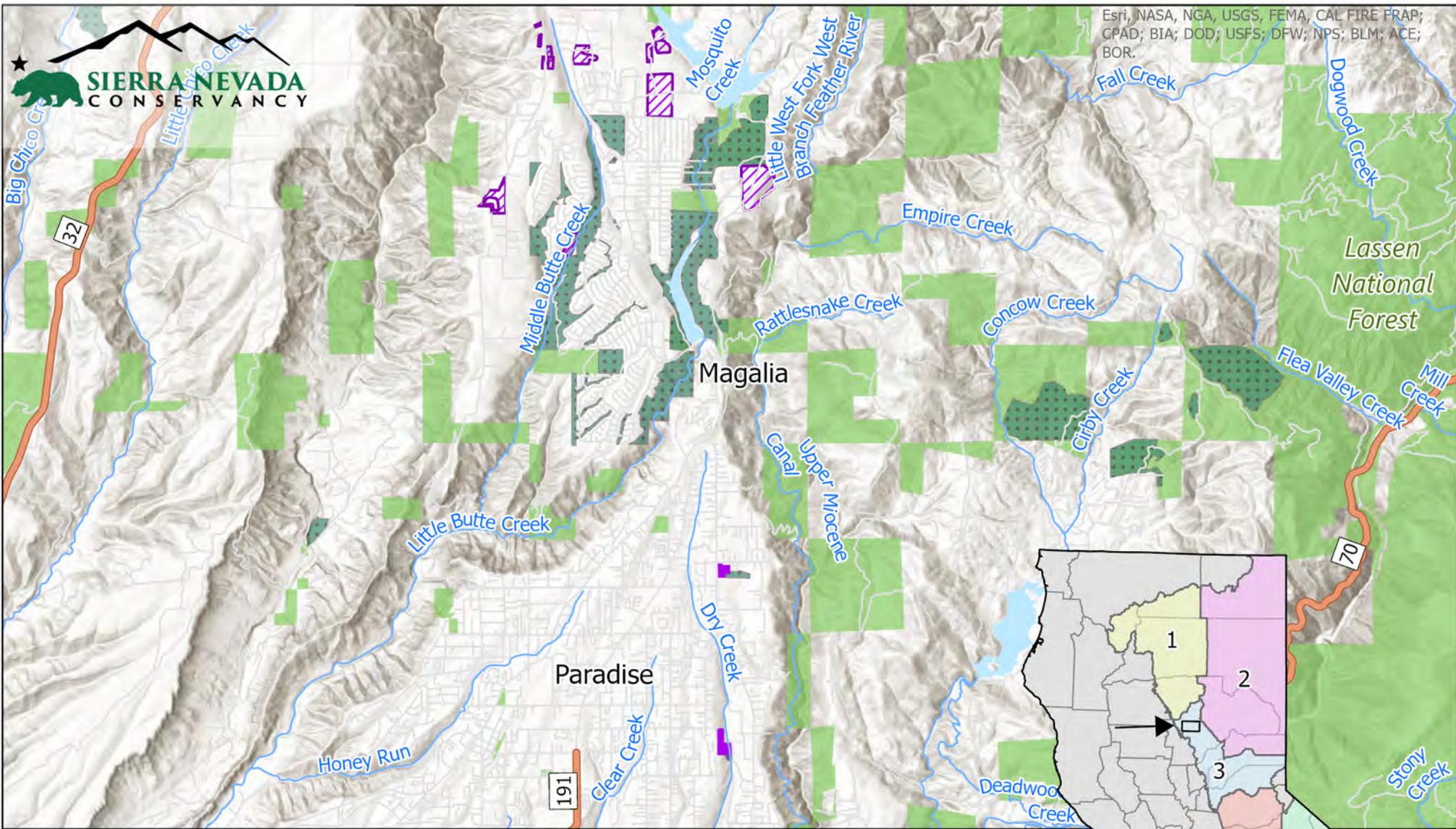
Opposition:

- None received

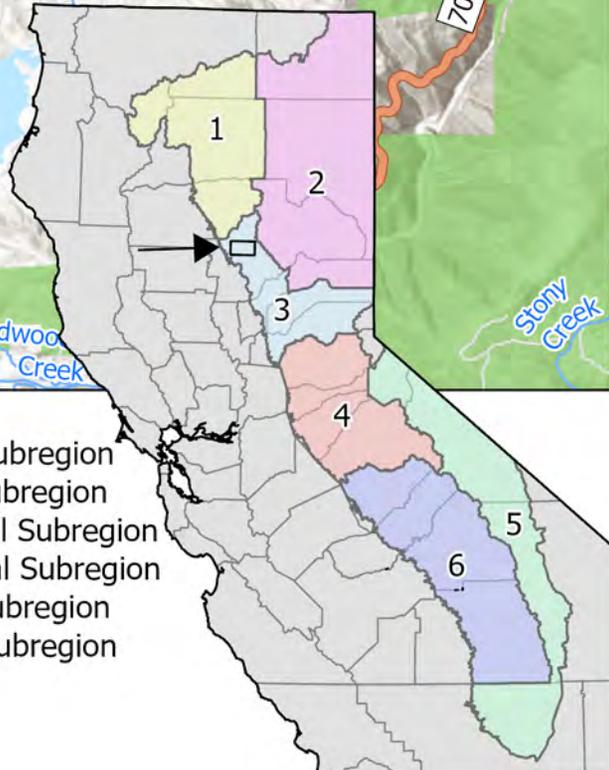
Project Performance Measures

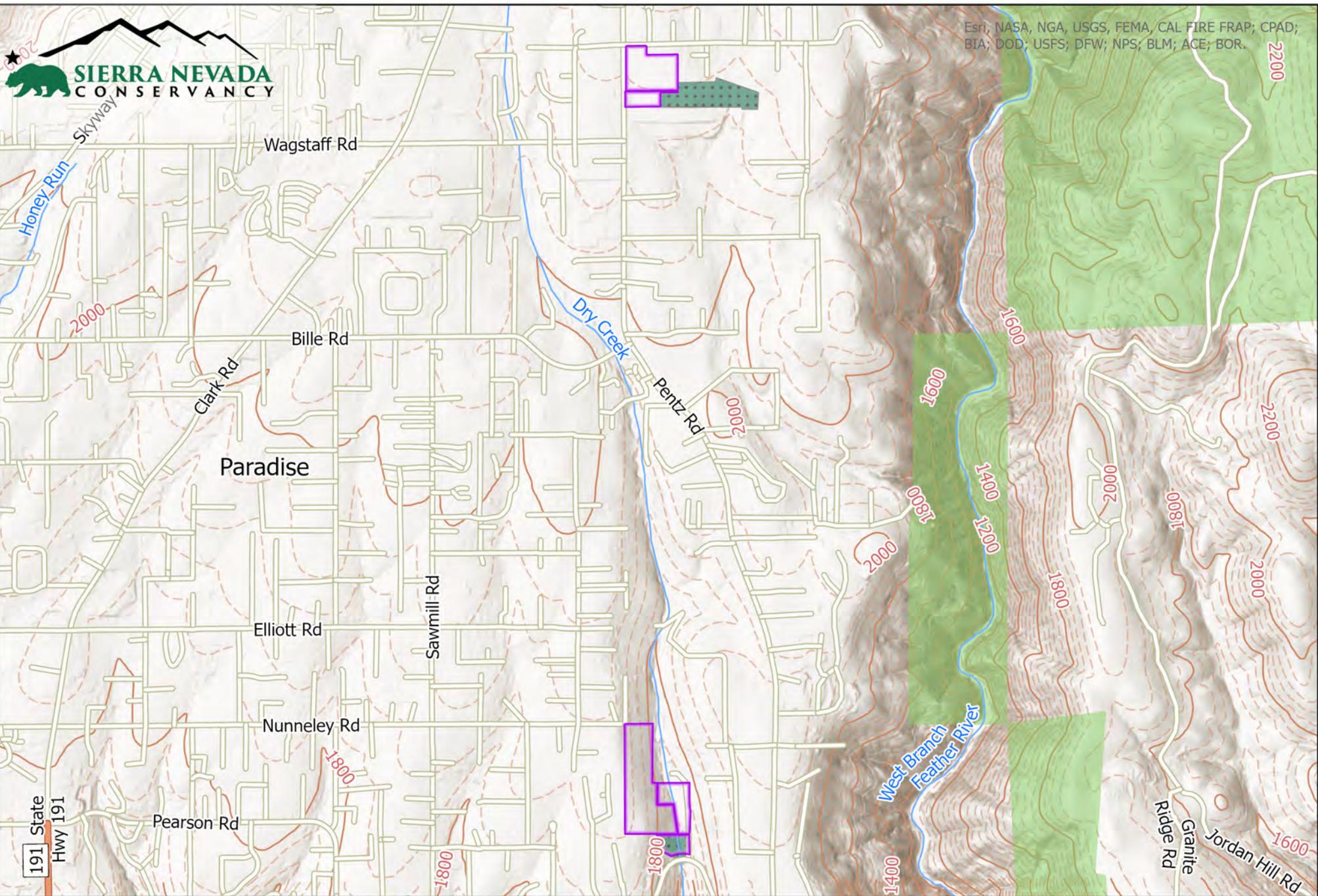
There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project-specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant agreement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

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored



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

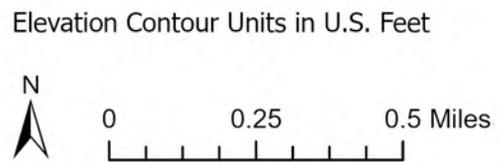


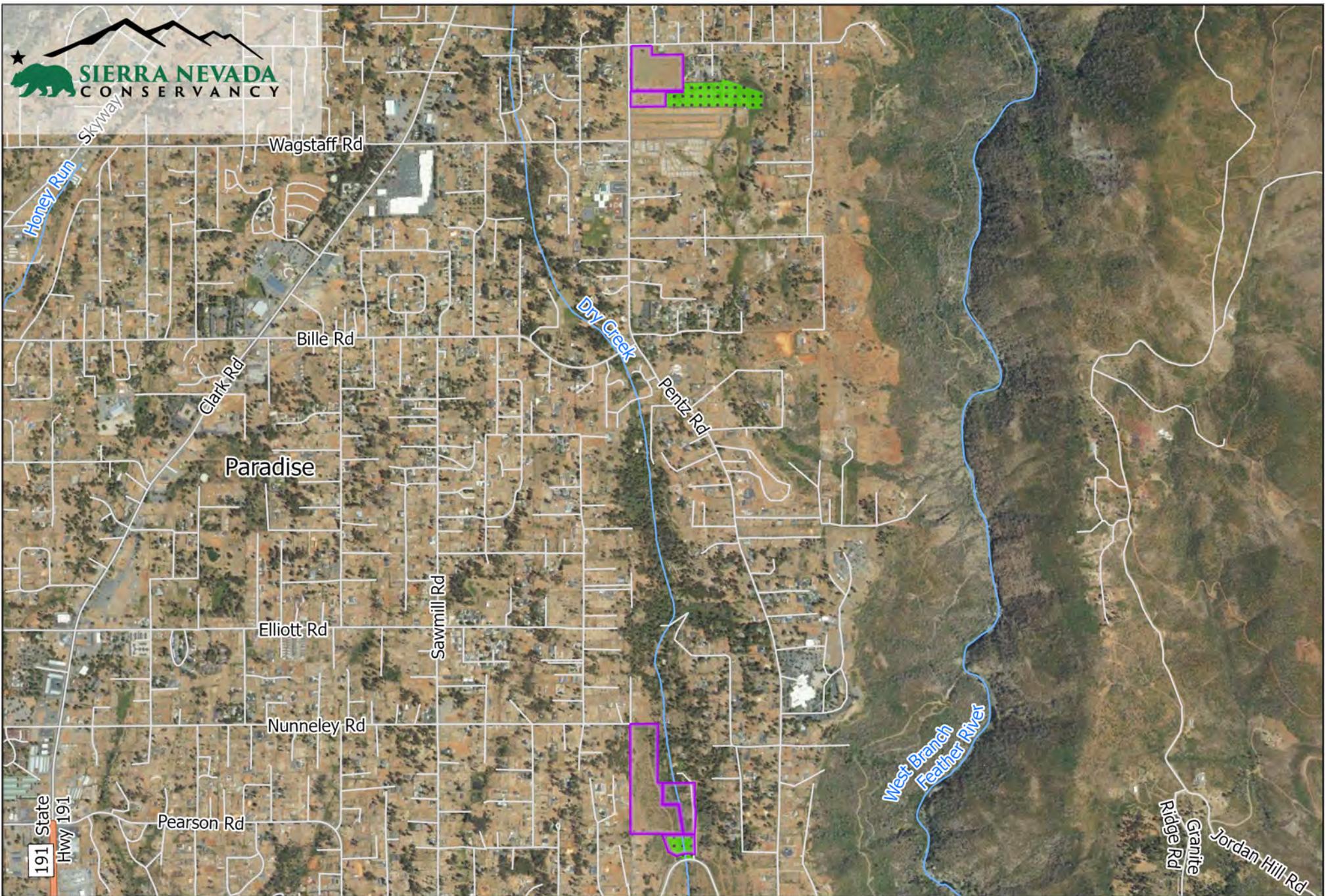


1547: Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project
 Butte County Fire Safe Council

Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, FEMA, CAL FIRE FRAP; CPAD; BIA; DOD; USFS; DFW; NPS; BLM; ACE; BOR.

- Proposed Additional Parcels
- Other SNC Implementation Grants
- Public Lands

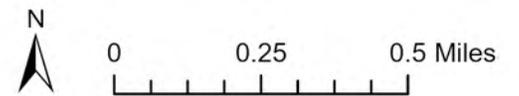




1547: Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project
Butte County Fire Safe Council

-  Proposed Additional Parcels
-  Other SNC Implementation Grants

Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet



To: Governor’s Office of Land Use and
Climate Innovation
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

From:
Public Agency:
Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
Mary Akens
(530) 450-5177

Lead Agency (*if different from above*):
Town of Paradise
5555 Skyway
Paradise, CA 95969
Susan Hartman
(530) 265-1222

SUBJECT: Filing of Notice of Determination in compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number (if submitted to State Clearinghouse): 2022080197

Project Title: Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project Amendment (SNC 1547.1)

Project Applicant: Butte County Fire Safe Council

Project Location (include county): Noble Park (Merrill Rd and Pentz Rd) and Oak Creek Park (Pearson Road and Hilbe Drive) and a parcel adjacent to the east side of Oak Creek Park (APN 054-210-005-000) within the Town of Paradise, Butte County, California.

Project Description: The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would amend grant agreement *1547 Magalia Forest and Wildfire Resilience Project* with the Butte County Fire Safe Council (BCFSC) to authorize the use of grant funds for approximately 27 acres of fuels-reduction activities in Noble Park and Oak Creek Park and adjacent parcel in Paradise, Butte County, California. Noble Park and Oak Creek Park are both owned by Paradise Recreation and Park District (PRPD); the parcel adjacent to Oak Creek Park is privately owned. In Noble Park, the BCFSC would partner with the Prescribed Burn Association to implement an approximately 10-acre, low-intensity broadcast burn to address noxious blackberry and star thistle weeds, as well as address overgrowth of grasses and fuels. In Oak Creek Park, treatments including, but not limited to, grazing; hand cut and pile burn; broadcast burn; lop and scatter would occur on approximately 12 acres. On the privately owned parcel adjacent to the east side of Oak Creek Park, treatments including, but not limited to, grazing; hand cut and pile burn; lop and scatter would occur on approximately five acres.

This is to advise that the **Sierra Nevada Conservancy (Responsible Agency)** has approved the above-described project on **December 11, 2025**, and has made the following determinations regarding the above-described project:

1. The project **will not** have a significant effect on the environment.
2. A **Mitigated Negative Declaration and Addendum were** prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.
3. Mitigation measures **were** a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan **was** adopted for this project.
5. A statement of Overriding Considerations **was not** adopted for this project.
6. Findings **were not** made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to certify that the Mitigated Negative Declaration and record of project approval is available to the General Public at:

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

Signature (Public Agency): _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

Authority cited: Sections 21083, Public Resources Code
Reference Section 21000-21174, Public Resources Code

Exhibit A

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Land Conservation Grant Program Amendment to SNC Project Number 1431-LC

SNC ID Number: 1431-LC

Applicant: Sierra Foothill Conservancy

Project Title: Veater / Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Project

SNC Subregion: Southwest

County(ies): Madera

Funding Amount Requested: \$102,350

Funding Amount Recommended: \$102,350

Total Project Cost: \$989,386

Funding Authority: California Budget Act of 2022

Project Scope / Description

The Sierra Foothill Conservancy's (SFC) Veater / Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Project provides planning support to prepare at least 1,063 acres for future conservation easement acquisition. This project is an amendment to the original 1431-LC project, which was titled the Veater Ranch Conservation Easement Development Project. The new property is also in the Highway-41 corridor of Madera County, near Coarsegold, CA.

This amendment was requested by the SFC because the owner of the Veater Ranch decided to stop pursuing the future sale of a conservation easement. The Ekarnas Hemman parcel has similar conservation values as the Veater Ranch and is located adjacent to the same set of already conserved lands that made the Veater Ranch an SFC priority. The owner has offered to contribute to project costs by funding the Mineral Remoteness Option, Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, and the appraisal. This contribution will make the acquisition of the Ekarnas Hemman parcel possible with the remaining 1431-LC budget. Once due diligence is complete, the owner plans to donate the conservation easement to the SFC.

The project's location in the Coarsegold area is within a network of other privately and publicly protected lands, including two other conservation easements on private ranches, Bureau of Land Management lands, and Sierra National Forest lands. This acquisition will fit into an existing greenbelt adjacent to route CA-41 where development is becoming more common.

The SFC is an accredited land trust holding 54 conservation easements across 56,270 acres. Including other protected acreage, such as fee title, easements, and transfers, SFC manages 67,255 acres within its service area with the majority of those lands belonging to family-owned working rangelands similar to the property identified in this planning grant. The SFC also belongs to the California Council of Land Trusts and the Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council. The property is currently owned by Paul J. Sidenblad, who is a willing partner in this project. Post-acquisition land use would remain as unirrigated pastureland and would be monitored in perpetuity by SFC.

The SFC and the private landowner will use this planning project to ultimately secure \$989,386 of donated value, in-kind support, and other acquisition funding. This amount reflects additional SFC staff time, the planning contributions identified above, and the cost of the conservation easement itself, which the current owner plans to donate.

This planning effort supports the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Land Conservation goals and will protect water resources within the Upper Fresno River watershed.

Project Schedule

Project Tasks and Deliverables	Timeline
Acquisition finance structure finalization	March 2026
Title report	March 2026
Mineral remoteness opinion	March 2026
ESA Phase 1 / transaction screen	March 2026
Option agreement or purchase & sale agreement signed	March 2026
Conservation easement terms negotiated and finalized	April 2026
Long-term adaptive management plan	June 2026
Baseline conditions report completed	June 2026
Appraisal	June 2026
Install sign on property	July 2026
Final deed of conservation easement recording	August 2026
Estimated Project Completion Date	August 30, 2026

Project Costs

Project Costs	SNC Funding
SFC legal counsel	\$48,320.50
SFC staff time	\$15,621.43
Administrative costs	\$9,591.29
Previously expended funds from Veater Ranch	\$28,816.78
Total	\$102,350

Project Letters of Support or Opposition

Support:

- None received

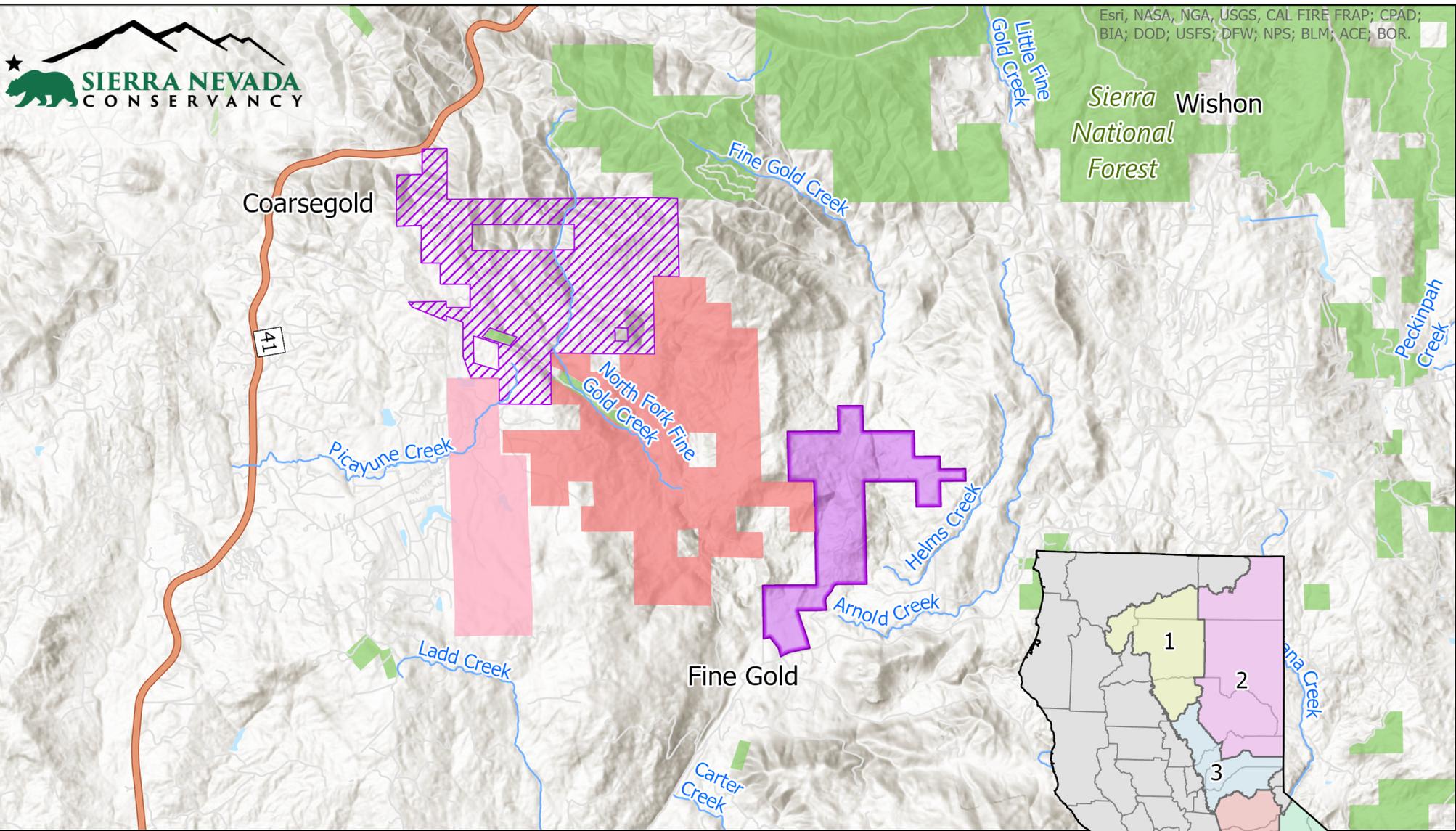
Opposition:

- 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.

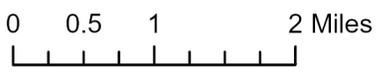
- Percent of Pre-Project and Planning Efforts Resulting in Project Implementation



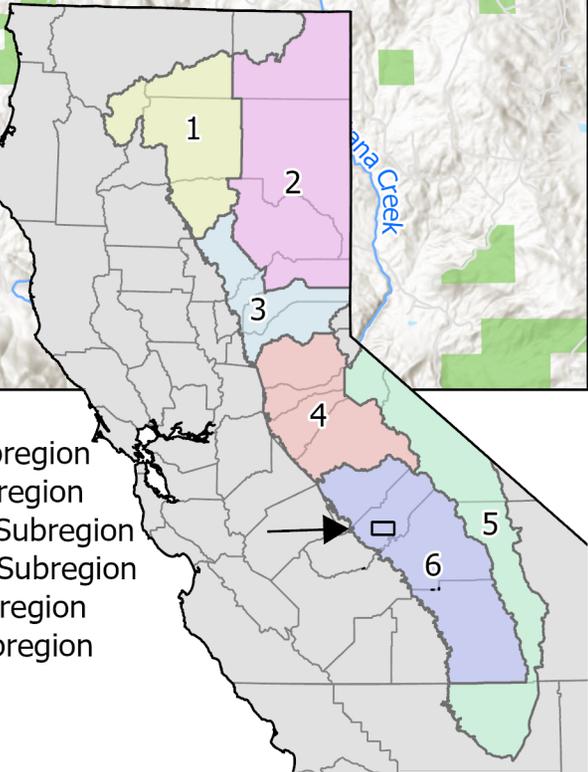
Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, CAL FIRE FRAP; CPAD; BIA; DOD; USFS; DFW; NPS; BLM; ACE; BOR.

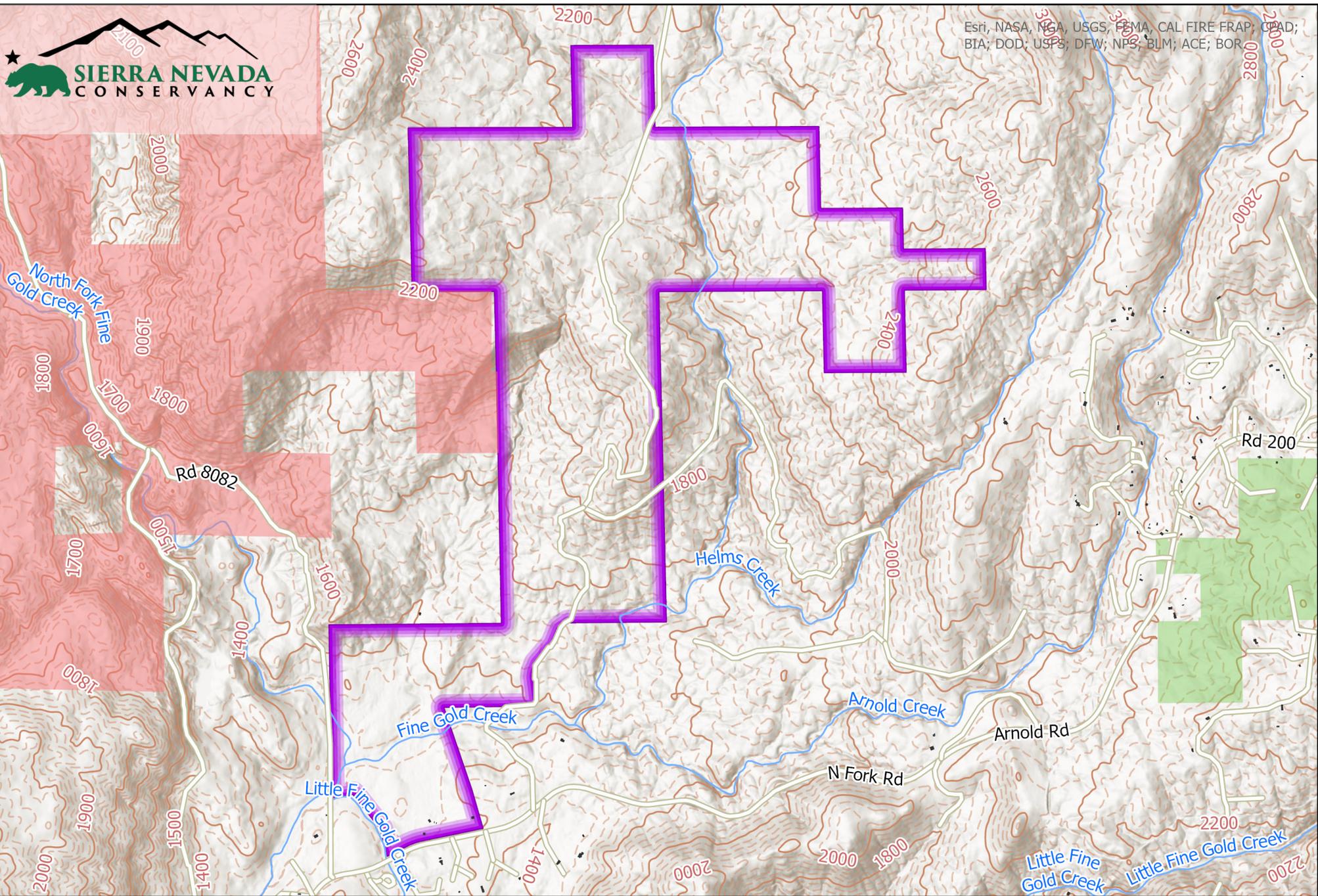
1431-LC: Veater/Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Project
 Sierra Foothill Conservancy

-  Original 1431
-  Amended 1431
-  Public Lands
-  California Rangeland Trust Conservation Easement
-  Sierra Foothill Conservancy Conservation Easement



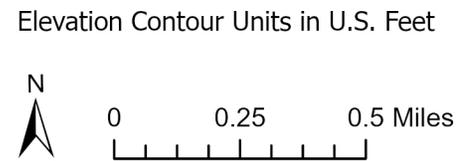
1. Northwest Subregion
2. Northeast Subregion
3. North Central Subregion
4. South Central Subregion
5. Southeast Subregion
6. Southwest Subregion

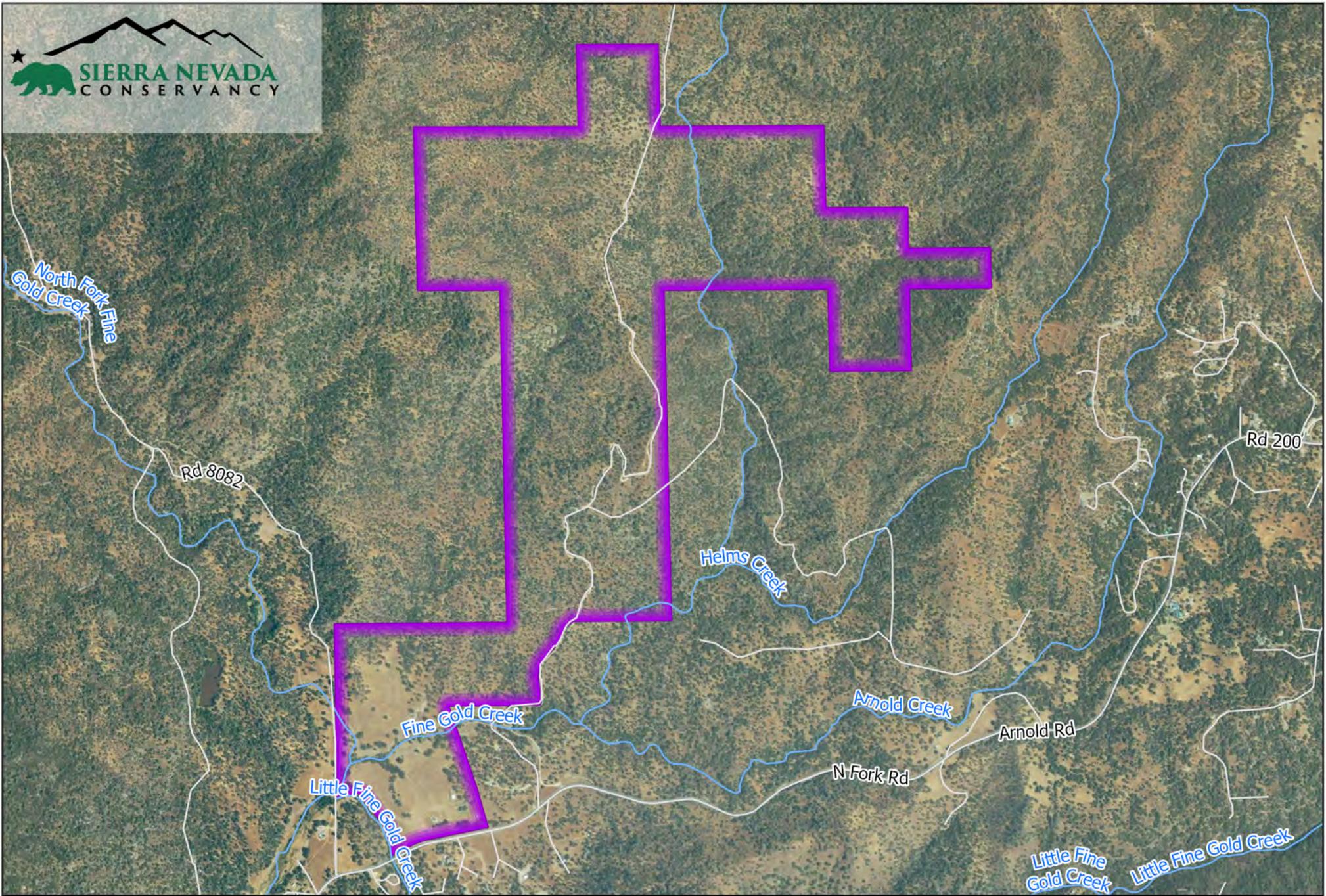




**1431-LC: Veater/Ekarnas Hemman
Conservation Easement Project**
Sierra Foothill Conservancy

- Amended 1431
- Buildings
- Roads
- Public Lands
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy Conservation Easement

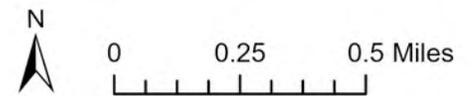




1431-LC: Veater/Ekarnas Hemman
Conservation Easement Project
Sierra Foothill Conservancy

 Amended 1431
 Roads

Elevation Contour Units in U.S. Feet



To: Governor's Office of Land Use &
Climate Innovation
1400 10th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Project Title: Veater / Ekarnas Hemman Conservation Easement Development Project Amendment (SNC1431.1-LC) [SCH 2023030168]

Project Location – Specific: Six contiguous parcels directly north of the community of Fine Gold, Madera County. APNs 054-271-002, 066-110-014, 050-010-009, 054-271-006, 054-260-004, 050-010-011.

Project Location - City: Fine Gold

Project Location - County: Madera

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has amended grant agreement SNC1431 with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy to approve use of the remaining grant funds to conduct planning and due-diligence activities for a potential future conservation easement to be placed on approximately 1,063-acres just north of Fine Gold, Madera County. The SNC grant funds will be used to support grantee staff time for due-diligence activities, potentially including such items as a mineral remoteness opinion, a phase one environment site assessment (ESA) or transaction screen, an appraisal, review of the title report and resolution of issues, developing an agreement reflecting the final financial structure of the acquisition, a long-term adaptive management plan, a baseline conditions report, and a draft of the conservation easement terms. The project's location in the greater Coarsegold area is within a network of other privately and publicly protected lands, including two other conservation easements on private ranches, Bureau of Land Management lands, and Sierra National Forest lands. This acquisition will fit into an existing greenbelt adjacent to route CA-41 where development is becoming more common.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

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

Sierra Foothill Conservancy
Bridget Fithian, Executive Director
209.742.5556
PO Box 691
5065 Highway 140, Suite G
Mariposa, CA 95338

Exempt Status:

Statutory Exemption: Pub. Resources Code, Section 21102 and CEQA Guidelines,

Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies under
Categorical Exemption: CEQA Guidelines Section 15306, Information Collection

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is Statutorily Exempt under Section 15262 Feasibility and Planning Studies as the project only involves planning studies for possible future actions, which the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board has not approved, adopted, or funded; there is no legally binding effect on later activities. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15306 Information Collection (Class 6) because it consists of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a disturbance to environmental resources. The proposed activities are for information gathering purposes and are part of a study leading to an action that a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. This project does not fall within any exceptions to the categorical exemption.

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
December 11, 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 on 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 on 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 May 1, 2025, and September 30, 2025, Angela Avery, SNC Executive Officer approved and executed 14 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 May 1, 2025, and September 30, 2025

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Amendment Purpose
1065.6	Diamond Mountain Forest and Watershed Restoration Project	Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc.	Lassen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the total acreage of the project area, reducing acres of prescribed fire and increasing acres of hand chipping. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1282.1	Grant Grove Big Stump Ecological Restoration Project, Phase Two	Great Basin Institute	Tulare, Fresno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope, tasks, and deliverables to reflect a change in total treatment acreage. The acreage changes include substituting treatable acres by adding additional acres, removing some units and replacing other units with treatable areas and activities covered under NEPA and CEQA. • No additional funding required. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed, and all other requirements under Pub. Resources Code, section 4799.05, were met.
1369.2	Bummerville/Blizzard Mine Fuels Reduction and Forest Restoration Project	Calaveras County Resource Conservation District	Calaveras	<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 3rd advance. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Amendment Purpose
1378.1	Cohasset Forest Resilience Project	Butte County Fire Safe Council	Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope and tasks to update wildfire recovery and forest-restoration treatments due to the impacts of the Park Fire. Herbicide treatment was added to reduce future fire intensity and to prevent significant erosion impacts. • No additional funding required. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed.
1410.1-RT	Modoc Line Rail Trail Planning	Lassen Land and Trails Trust	Modoc, Lassen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed an invoicing error as a result of administrative overhead expenses being billed to Project Management rather than the Administrative Costs line item. An allotted amount for Administrative Costs wasn't reflected in the Project Budget. • Amended the project scope and tasks to reflect an increase in miles of trail planned and the inclusion of an engineering assessment for a portion of the trail. • No additional funding required. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed.
1414.1-RT	South Siskiyou Sustainable Recreation & Trails Partnership	Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance	Siskiyou, Shasta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope and deliverables to reflect the removal of the CEQA analyses as an activity and deliverable, shifting focus towards maintenance and enhancement of existing recreation infrastructure and access before the development of additional new infrastructure. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.

Executive Officer Authorized Grant Agreement Amendments and Grant Awards

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Amendment Purpose
1439.1-LC	Butte Creek Canyon Preserve	Paradise Recreation and Park District	Butte	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Timeline and Project Completion Date Extension from February 2026 to February 2028. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1463.1-RT	Bizz Johnson Trailhead Planning	Lassen Land and Trails Trust	Lassen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope and project budget to address a billable rate issue and to remove an environmental compliance task from the project deliverables, while retaining the supporting documentation and analysis needed for this planning project. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1485.1-RT	Sherwin Area Trails and Trailhead Expansion	Mammoth Lakes Recreation	Mono	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Timeline and Project Completion Date Extension from February 2026 to February 2028. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1516.3	Caldor Fire Restoration Project – Phase One	Great Basin Institute	El Dorado	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope, tasks, and deliverables to reflect treatment and activity changes. The changes include felled tree removal for salable wood products, where feasible or otherwise chipped and left on site or removed. There was also the addition of biomass hauling and related road maintenance activities. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.

Executive Officer Authorized Grant Agreement Amendments and Grant Awards

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Amendment Purpose
1544.1	Sarah Priest Fuels Reduction Project	American Indian Council of Mariposa County/Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation	Mariposa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the Advance clause of the Grant Agreement to waive the retention for this project. • No additional funding required. • Amendment did not trigger CEQA environmental review and/or documentation.
1632.1	Claremont Forest Resiliency Project	Mule Deer Foundation	Plumas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope, tasks, and deliverables to reflect a shift in treatment acreage that includes additional acres for fuels-reduction activities. • No additional funding required. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed, and all other requirements under Pub. Resources Code, section 4799.05, were met.
1636.1	Forest Projects Plan – Phase One B	Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority	Amador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope, tasks, and deliverables to reflect an increase in the total project acreage for treatment. • No additional funding required. • Additional CEQA environmental review was conducted and a new CEQA Notice of Exemption was filed, and all other requirements under Pub. Resources Code, section 4799.05, were met.
1669.1	Ishi Wilderness Fire Restoration Planning	Resource Conservation District of Tehama County	Tehama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amended the project scope and tasks to expand the project boundary and increase the planning acreage to address changes from impacts of the Park Fire, as well as clarify specific planning deliverables. • 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 Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP); 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 May 1, 2025, and September 30, 2025, the executive officer approved, executed, and filed a Notice of Exemption for one grant award under the RFFCP.

SNC #	Project Name	Grantee	County(ies)	Project or Grant Purpose
1726-RFFCP - R2599010	(2022RFFCP) WIP Capacity Subgrant – California Climate Hub	The Regents of the University of California, on behalf of its Davis campus.	Regionwide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Award: \$121,500 • To provide technical assistance and education to RFFCP subgrant recipients, their associated stakeholders, and other representatives of forest and fire collaboratives and partnerships in SNC’s service area, intending to increase their capacity and ability to engage in effective forest and fire management. • Grantee will develop and implement a series of workshops and assistance forums focused on increasing participant understanding of project monitoring and monitoring plan development. • CEQA Notice of Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, sections 15061 and 15262.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025**

Key Meetings and Presentations

September – November 2025

September 17-19: Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) Annual Meeting:

Executive Officer, Angie Avery, Field Operations & Grants Division Chief, Andy Fristensky, and Policy & Outreach Division Chief, Brittany Covich, attended this meeting at Everline Resort in Olympic Valley, CA. Angie participated in a panel discussion on the topic of “Stewarding California’s Forested Lands for a Safer Tomorrow.”

September 23: Fall 2025 All Conservancy/Wildlife Conservation Board Meeting:

Executive Officer, Angie Avery, Deputy Executive Officer, Amy Lussier, and Field Operations & Grants Division Chief, Andy Fristensky, attended this virtual meeting hosted by the San Joaquin River Conservancy. The meeting provided an opportunity for each of the state conservancies to share a Fiscal Year review, and to hear from leadership on various related topics and programs, including Access for All, the Climate Bond, the Wildfire and Landscape Resilience Action Plan, and nature-based solutions.

October 8: Nature-Based Solutions Policy Tour: Executive Officer, Angie Avery, and Deputy Executive Officer, Amy Lussier, attended this one-day policy-focused field tour organized by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the California Tahoe Conservancy. On this tour, participants were able to see first-hand what nature-based solutions (NBS) look like in the Sierra-Cascade Region, including wetland restoration, wildfire resilience, and post-fire reforestation. There were also opportunities to see how CA state conservancies are bringing together diverse partners on lands with complex ownership patterns to advance these goals. The tours started and ended at the CA Conservation Corps Tahoe Campus in South Lake Tahoe, CA, and stops included Markleevillage Fuels Reduction Project, Upper Truckee Marsh Restoration Project, and North Upper Truckee Community Protection Project.

October 13: American River Forest Health Policy Tour: Executive Officer, Angie Avery, Policy & Outreach Division Chief, Brittany Covich, and Field Operations & Grants Division Chief, Andy Fristensky, attended this one-day policy focused field tour organized by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Mountain Counties Water Resources Association (MCWRA). On this tour, participants were able to explore the critical importance of both immediate community protection and broader landscape and watershed restoration projects. It started and ended at the PCWA facility in Foresthill, CA, and stops included recreation and hydropower infrastructure at Oxbow Reservoir at Indian Bar, and the SNC funded Sugar Pine Roadside Fuel Break Project. The event was co-sponsored by Assemblymembers Joe Patterson and Diane Papan.

October 17-19: 2025 Sierra Nevada Tribal Summit: Executive Officer, Angie Avery, spoke at the “Cultural Celebration, Reception, and Artisans Market” on Saturday evening at the Zephyr Point Conference Center in Zephyr Cove. The event aimed to honor the cultural wealth, leadership, and creative economies of Indigenous Peoples across the Sierra Nevada bioregion. Angie spoke alongside other key agency allies and intergenerational tribal voices. A full program and other details can be found at the [Indigenous Futures Society website](#).

October 22-23: 2025 California Economic Summit: Executive Officer, Angie Avery, and Policy & Outreach Division Chief, Brittany Covich, attended this convening at the Adventist Health Arena in Stockton, CA. The annual event is produced by California Forward in collaboration with the California Stewardship Network and provided an opportunity for regional leaders from business, community, government, philanthropy, labor, and more to catalyze a New California Economy that is resilient, sustainable, and inclusive. A full program and other details can be found at the [California Economic Summit website](#).

October 29: 2025 CalHR Annual Conference: Deputy Executive Officer, Amy Lussier, attended this event at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in Sacramento. This year’s conference explored the art and science of change management, equipping state HR professionals with strategies to embrace change with purpose. It featured dynamic guest speakers, interactive sessions, and informative panel discussions. Additional details can be found at the [CalHR Conference webpage](#).

October 30: CA State Leadership Summit: Executive Officer, Angie Avery, and Deputy Executive Officer, Amy Lussier, attended this event led by the Government Operations Agency (GovOps) at the May Lee State Office Complex in Sacramento. This year’s theme was “*Working Better, Together, Efficiency in Action*,” reflecting a commitment to fostering collaboration, innovation, and efficiency across state government. Additional details can be found on the [State Leadership Summit website](#).

November 7: Tahoe Central-Sierra Initiative Steering (TCSI) Committee Meeting: Field Operations & Grants Division Chief, Andy Fristensky, attended this quarterly meeting.

November 21: Mountain Counties Water Resources Association (MCWRA) Fall Water Forum: Executive Officer, Angie Avery, presented, and Policy & Outreach Division Chief, Brittany Covich, attended this event at the Ridge Golf Course and Events Center in Auburn, CA. The program included a statewide legislative debrief, keynote speakers, panel discussion, and opportunities for networking.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy
December 11, 2025

Letters of Support

September 2025
through
November 2025



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

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation

October 29, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Hugh Safford

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is pleased to recommend Dr. Hugh Safford's project, *Assessing the long-term effects of fuel reduction and wildfire on forest health and resilience in the Lake Tahoe Basin*, 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. A long-term, science-based understanding of landscape conditions, the drivers of change, and the effectiveness of treatment is essential for achieving these goals.

In the past several years, tree mortality, extreme weather events, and catastrophic wildfires have devastated communities and transformed the forested landscapes of the Sierra Nevada. These events have catalyzed efforts to better understand the ecological and social impact of wildfire and to identify management actions that reduce risk while maintaining ecosystem functions. Dr. Safford's research in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has made invaluable contributions to our understanding of disturbance dynamics. Extending this work will provide critical data on long-term ecological processes and the cumulative effect of management and climate on forest resilience. Long-term research enables researchers to distinguish natural variability from lasting change and to evaluate the outcomes of different management approaches over time.

Dr. Safford is exceptionally well-qualified to lead this effort. Through his roles with the University of California, Davis and the United States Forest Service, he has spent decades studying forest and fire ecology, management, and treatment effects across the Sierra Nevada. His applied research has informed land managers in the Lake Tahoe Basin and throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region. The proposed project will generate insights that directly support forest restoration and management efforts regionwide.

For these reasons, the SNC strongly supports Dr. Hugh Safford's project and recommends it for funding.

Sincerely,

Angela M. Avery
Angela Avery
Executive Officer





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Nevada Lake Tahoe License Plate Program

October 29, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Hugh Safford

To Whom It May Concern:

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Sincerely,



Angela Avery
Executive Officer





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Tahoe Fund

October 29, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Hugh Safford

To Whom It May Concern:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is pleased to recommend Dr. Hugh Safford's project, *Assessing the long-term effects of fuel reduction and wildfire on forest health and resilience in the Lake Tahoe Basin* for funding.

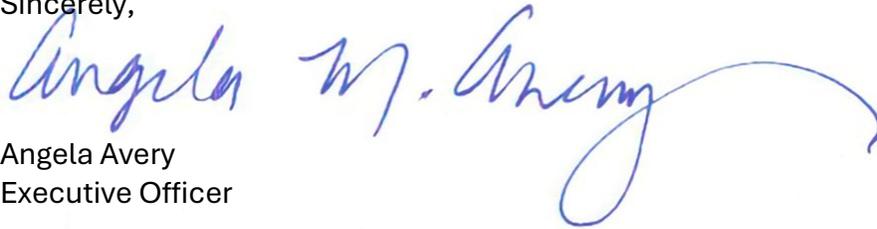
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For these reasons, the SNC strongly supports Dr. Hugh Safford's project and recommends it for funding.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery
Executive Officer





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Jennifer Norris, Executive Director
California Wildlife Conservation Board
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

November 6, 2025

Subject: Letter of Support for Alpine County's Park Ranch Acquisition

Dear Dr. Norris:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) enthusiastically supports the acquisition of the 1,688-acre Park Ranch and its conservation by Alpine County. We support Alpine County's request for funds from public and private funding sources to acquire this scenic property, including 1.6 miles of the East Fork of the Carson River and 3 miles of Markleeville Creek and other tributaries. This acquisition is essential to protect habitat for fish and wildlife, and to protect and expand public access and recreation. The acquisition will add significantly to conservation of the state-designated Wild and Scenic section of the East Fork Carson. The ranch is also excellent habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, monarch butterfly, songbirds, bald eagle, and the Carson mule deer herd. Acquisition of the land by Alpine County will have ecological, social, and economic benefits that extend far beyond the property to the watershed and landscape scale. We strongly urge the prioritization of this important acquisition.

Park Ranch supports a vital riparian refuge for wildlife, and will provide space for families from Markleeville, Lake Tahoe, Reno, Sacramento, and across California and Nevada to get outside and enjoy their public lands. Hikers, picnickers, birdwatchers, anglers, hunters, kayakers, and rafters will benefit from Alpine County's stewardship of the land. The acquisition complements the SNC-funded Towns to Trails Plan to connect Eastern Sierra communities. A network of existing trails through the ranch will facilitate hikers and anglers connecting to adjoining public lands and trails, including the public Markleeville Campground, which is an inholding in the ranch.

Importantly, a key economic and quality-of-life benefit the acquisition provides is reducing the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. During the Tamarack Fire in 2021, Park Ranch's pasturelands helped safeguard homes and businesses nearby. Continued stewardship of the wet meadows and pastures can provide fire breaks that increase defensible space around Markleeville.

Thank you for considering the request from Alpine County for funding this important conservation, wildfire resilience, recreation, and access land acquisition opportunity.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery
Executive Officer



