

Background

In January, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that California and Tuolumne County would receive \$70,359,459 in federal disaster relief funding through a grant under HUD's National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) Program. One of only 13 such grants in the nation awarded this year, the purpose of the Grant is to help aid Tuolumne County recover from the devastating Rim Fire of 2013.

The Grant provides assistance in three areas: (1) forest and watershed health (\$28.6M), (2) development of a biomass/wood products campus (\$22M), and (3) development of a community resilience center (\$19.8M). Under the Grant, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) will have overall project management responsibility for both the forest and watershed health and biomass utilization components of the effort. The Board has previously authorized staff to enter into agreements and hire required staff in support of this program, with the understanding that all costs to the SNC are reimbursable under the grant.

Current Status

Since announcement of the award, SNC staff has been participating in a series of meetings focused on ensuring strong coordination among all involved agencies and organizations. One of these meetings was a Roundtable Discussion hosted by the California Environmental Protection Agency, moderated by The Nature Conservancy, and attended by federal HUD representatives, Tuolumne County, and the many state agencies responsible for implementing the Grant. The Roundtable was an active discussion around the implementation of the Grant with focus on the ways the state might leverage these federal funds to address California's long-term environmental and resilience goals. Additionally, staff has been participating in a series of HUD training sessions designed to ensure full compliance with the HUD financial and reporting requirements under the Grant.

In terms of the components that SNC is responsible for, staff has been working with the project proponents to develop detailed scopes-of-work, metrics and project objectives for inclusion in the partnership agreements. At the time of this writing, the state is still awaiting the published Federal Register Notice of the Grant award, which will provide additional guidance regarding Grant requirements, and which is required before grant agreements can be signed and work on the ground can begin.

The SNC continues taking the steps necessary to hire two employees to help with this project with the goal of having new personnel active at the beginning of next fiscal year (all costs are funded under the grant).

Next Steps

Once the Federal Register process is complete and grant agreements are in place, staff will work with HUD to finalize the partnership agreement(s) that will allow SNC to fully carry out our responsibilities under the Grant. Staff will also engage with partners in

development of an Action Plan that is a HUD requirement under the program. Staff will also take next steps to hire staff to implement the program.

Recommendation

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