

Board Meeting AGENDA

September 7 – 8, 2016
Alpine County – East Subregion



SEPTEMBER 7, 2016

Board Tour

1:15 – 5:00 p.m.

Members of the Board and staff will participate in a field trip to explore issues and activities related to forest and watershed health in the East Subregion. Members of the public are invited to participate in the field tour but are responsible for their own transportation and lunch. The tour will start in the main parking lot of Sorensen's Resort located at 14255 Highway 88, Hope Valley, CA 96120.

Reception

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Following the Board tour, Boardmembers and staff will attend a reception open to the public. The reception will be held at Sorensen's Resort located at 14255 Highway 88, Hope Valley, CA 96120.

SEPTEMBER 8, 2016

Board Meeting

*Turtle Rock Park Community Center
17300 State Route 89
Markleeville, CA 96120*

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
(End time is approximate)

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Approval of June 2, 2016, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

IV. Public Comments

Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.

V. Board Chair's Report

VI. 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards (ACTION)

The Board may take action to adopt CEQA findings and award grants under the 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Program for the following projects:

- Project #851 – Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project, with Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency, based on review of the Negative Declaration approved by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority.
- Project #852 – Webber Lake Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA.
- Project #857 – Bucks Lake Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA.

- Project #882 – Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #884 – Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA.

VII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

- a. Administrative Update
- b. Policy and Outreach Update
- c. NDRC HUD Grant Update
- d. Tribal Forum Discussion Report
- e. Tree Mortality Task Force Update
- f. Miscellaneous Updates

VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

IX. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Staff will provide the Board with an update on the WIP.

X. Boardmembers' Comments

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

XI. Public Comments

Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.

Adjournment

Meeting Materials are available on the SNC Web site at www.sierranevada.ca.gov. For additional information, or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 823-4700, toll free at (877) 257-1212; via email to tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov; in person or by mail at: 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn CA 95603. For reasonable accommodations, including documents in alternative formats, please contact Ms. Armstrong at least **five (5)** working days in advance.

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, subdivision (e)(2)(B)(i).

Board Meeting MINUTES

Lassen Community College
Board Room
478-200 Hwy 139
Susanville, CA 96130



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Board Chair Kirwan welcomed the alternate non-voting Boardmembers: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eagle Lake Field Manager, Ken Collum; and United States Forest Service (USFS) Pacific Southwest Regional Office Director of Ecosystem Management, John Exline.

II. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, John Brissenden, Pam Giacomini, Bob Johnston, Bob Kirkwood, Todd Ferrara, Ron Hames, Doug Teeter, Randy Fletcher, John Exline, Ken Collum, Terrence O'Brien, Eraina Ortega, and Christopher Wright

Absent: Allen Ishida and Woody Smeck

III. Approval of March 2, 2016, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Action: Boardmember Bob Kirkwood moved, and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded, a motion to approve the March 2, 2016, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comments

No public comment at this time.

V. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair BJ Kirwan acknowledged that the spending reductions we have endured the past two fiscal years will not be in effect for the 2016-17 Fiscal Year and will allow the SNC to undertake activities in support of the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) and other priorities. She provided thanks to Boardmember Bob Kirkwood and Boardmember Pam Giacomini for their involvement with WIP activities.

VI. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham pointed out an attachment included in the Board meeting materials packet which is a correspondence written to Secretary Laird to express concern over the issues SNC has been experiencing related to Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS).

a. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Division Chief Amy Lussier provided the Board with an overview of the May Budget revise and the current status of the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). Lussier noted the slight increase

of \$79,000 in SNC's budget to assist in paying for the cost of CFS, pointing out that this is a one-time augmentation. She stated that the California Natural Resources Agency and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) are working with the Department of Finance (DOF) to determine if fiscal services can be brought in-house to provide cost savings for future years. Lussier added that CFS has made some coding errors which have resulted in a delay in closeout of the books for the current fiscal year.

Lussier added that the May Budget Revise included the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) Grant funding. In order to support administration of this money, SNC has submitted a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) to the DOF to add two full-time positions. The BCP asked for an increased reimbursement authority of \$400,000 for a total reimbursement authority of \$450,000 a year.

Lussier advised the Board that SNC currently has one vacancy within the Policy and Outreach Division and they hope to have the vacancy filled by August 1, 2016.

Boardmember Todd Ferrara inquired as to the short-term contracting agreement SNC has with California Conservation Corps (CCC) noted in the staff report and how this will assist in solving the Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS) issues. Lussier responded by stating that the immediate hope is that the CCC staff person will take on the extra workload associated with the issues between FI\$Cal and CFS, and as a result, ease the workload burden for SNC staff. Lussier added that a request has been submitted to CalHR for permission to hire the CCC staff person as a Retired Annuitant to assist with accounting issues. Boardmember John Brissenden noted that it would make sense to bring these transactions in-house to resolve the issues that Lussier had described.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Branham provided an update on the formation of the Sierra Consortium and stated that it is a welcome voice for the Sierra. Branham noted that the Consortium has a primary focus on legislative issues and is hoping to grow the Consortium to build a stronger voice in the Capitol.

Branham updated the Board on efforts at the congressional level to address the federal fire borrowing issues and broader forest health concerns. Branham advised that there are recent legislative proposals to streamline budget and NEPA processes. Boardmember John Exline stated that this is an issue that the US Forest Service (USFS) has been working on for two years. Exline further noted that the USFS field offices have been instructed to obligate all the monies they have by June 1 so funds would not be subject to fire transfer.

Branham updated the Board on Governor's Budget proposals regarding the use of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction funds for forest sector projects. Branham told the Board that the current Governor's proposal is to provide a total of \$150 million to CAL FIRE for forest health issues, with \$140 million of that going towards a variety of forest management activities.

Angela Avery, Regional Policy and Programs Chief, provided updates on several legislative bills that may have relevance for SNC.

- AB2444 (Garcia) – Parks Bond – Amendments have been added to this bill over the last month. The amendment allocated about \$25 million to SNC. In addition to line items that have been identified for specific Conservancies, \$50 million has been identified to go to forest restoration projects. The \$50 million dollar addition has been identified as funds that will be administered jointly by SNC and CAL FIRE.
- AB2480 (Bloom) – This bill would establish state policy that source watersheds are recognized and defined as integral parts of California's water system. Avery added that SNC sees this as an avenue to recognize source watersheds in the SNC region as an important part of the water system.
- AB2029 (Dahle) – This bill will expand forested areas eligible to be harvested with the intent of decreasing wildfire risks. Avery continued by stating that the bill has passed this week in the Assembly and is moving onto the Senate.

Avery notified the Board that Assembly Members Brian Dahle and Frank Bigelow, and Senators Tom Berryhill and Ted Gaines have been appointed to the SNC Board as legislative liaisons. Avery said SNC is working on a strategy to engage the liaisons.

Avery provided an update to the Board regarding upcoming tours scheduled. The SNC has organized a tour to the Teakettle Experimental Forest on June 23 and 24 to study the impacts of forest thinning treatments on long term carbon storage. Stops on this tour will provide an overview of forest management opportunities and highlight the importance of large landscape projects. Another tour, scheduled in July, will be co-sponsored by the Placer County Water Agency and will focus on fire history and restoration, as well as water storage and biomass issues.

Avery acknowledged the outstanding work performed by newly promoted Outreach and Communication's Manager Brittany Covich. Covich will now take on a supervisory role with a staff of three.

Avery provided a brief presentation to show the Board what SNC is doing to promote the Conservancy through social media. The presentation included examples of social media posts as well as story map slides.

Avery provided the Board with a brief overview of social media numbers stating that SNC has just received 1,000 “likes” on our Facebook site and an overall increase in activity through our various social media outlets.

c. Tree Mortality Task Force Update

Mt. Whitney Area Manager Randi Jorgensen provided a brief background about the Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF) and highlighted an attachment in the Board materials that identifies the various TMTF work groups established by the Governor’s proclamation. She provided the Board with recent USFS mortality numbers of 40 million trees and stated that 80% of the trees in the Sierra National Forest are dead or dying. The TMTF is addressing this issue with several approaches including innovative issues incorporating biomass utilization. Jorgensen said the Sierra has begun to suffer from the economic downside as a result of the tree mortality issues.

Boardmember Bob Kirkwood would like to see research and information shared concerning treatment areas and impact of drought, along with mortality rates. Branham responded stating that SNC will continue to gather data on this issue to shed light on some of the true contributing factors and underlying conditions.

The Board engaged in a brief conversation asking about any effects of the Governor’s proclamation on PG&E and the PUC, as well as any recent legislation that could draw these two organizations together. Branham indicated that there has been dialogue between the Governor’s Office and the PUC and that PG&E has requested Sierra Pacific Industries to modestly increase generation from their biomass plants, but very little additional progress has been seen.

d. NDRC HUD Grant Update

Avery provided Boardmembers with a timeline highlighting significant dates and updated the Board on recent activities including the hiring of staff to support administration of the grant funds. Avery reviewed the areas of support for grant funds and said there has been a working group created to determine how funds will be allocated in each of the five different categories.

Brissenden asked Avery for an actual dollar amount that will be spent for on-the-ground projects. Avery explained that SNC would receive five percent of the amount for the forest health and biomass areas to cover administrative costs, with the remainder going to on-the-ground project implementation.

e. Miscellaneous Updates

Branham provided the Board with a handout listing key SNC meeting participation. This will be a document provided to Boardmembers at each meeting moving forward.

VII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul provided the Board with a brief update on legislative activity stating that there is currently no legislation moving that would affect the SNC operations.

Sproul updated the Board that CAL FIRE has produced for public comment a Program Environmental Impact Report on a proposed vegetation management plan for the state. Sproul will continue to monitor this document and report back to the Board. Boardmember Terrence O'Brien requested that Sproul report back to the Board on any comments that will be made by the California Air Resources Board.

VIII. 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards (ACTION)

Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman opened the grant awards discussion by informing the Board that the SNC received an abundance of outstanding applications in the current round. Kingman acknowledged applicants and SNC staff for the effort that goes into developing these applications. Kingman also acknowledged the many applicants that traveled to attend the Board meeting.

Mt. Lassen Area Manager Andy Fristensky reminded the Board that, to date, the SNC has awarded seven Proposition 1 grants for a total of over \$1.4 million. Fristensky also summarized the status of applications received in the current round: 29 received, six withdrawn or not recommended, 15 still under review, and eight recommended for Board consideration at this meeting. Fristensky mentioned two applications from a previous round are also being recommended for a total of 10 applications in the amount of approximately \$3.2 million.

Fristensky then provided overviews of seven projects from the Mt. Lassen Area: Barry Point Fire Ecosystem Restoration Project (#867); Lookout/Upper Pit Watershed Restoration Project (#865); Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (#866); Wolf and Grizzly Creek Municipal Watershed Protection (#837); Sierra Buttes/Gold Lakes Basin Properties Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (#864); Scotts Flat Reservoir Fuels Treatment, Phase III (#873); and the American River Headwaters Improvement Project (#841).

Boardmembers discussed the amount of money necessary to complete a Negative Declaration noting that money spent on environmental review is money taken away from work on the ground. The Board recommended that staff take special note of the cost and workload associated with the environmental review process while developing future recommendations.

The Board recognized the American River Headwaters Improvement Project (#841) for raising additional funding to perform very expensive restoration work and demonstrating a high-level of commitment to the project.

The Board engaged in a more detailed discussion regarding SNC application scoring criteria. Boardmembers addressed issues including the merits, costs, and values of funding projects on public and private lands, as well as the value and importance of including Community Wildfire Protection Plans in evaluation criteria.

Kingman reported that if the grants recommended for approval at this meeting were awarded, the SNC will have allocated \$4.7 of the \$10 million dollar Proposition 1 grant allocation, noting that the SNC is on track to allocate the entire dollar amount in the time frame provided.

Mt. Whitney Area Manager Randi Jorgensen provided overviews of three Mt. Whitney Area projects: South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed Restoration (#885), Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project (#887), and Long Gulch Watershed Enhancement Plan (#888).

Public Comment:

Rem Scherzinger, General Manager, Nevada Irrigation District, expressed his appreciation for consideration of Project #873, Scotts Flat Reservoir Fuels Treatment. Scherzinger told the Board that this specific project is much more than a fuels reduction project and said that it will allow for consideration of biomass utilization and create a firebreak for the Cascade Shores homes.

Lloyd Keefer, President of the Lassen County Fire Safe Council, expressed appreciation for Board consideration of the Project #866, Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project, indicating it will provide a tremendous value to both public and private lands.

Lauren Hubert, Conservation Project Manager of the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, expressed appreciation to the Board for their consideration and time on past and current projects.

Autumn Gronborg, American River Conservancy, provided thanks to the Board for consideration of the American River Headwaters Project #841. Gronborg also provided thanks to SNC staff for the technical assistance provided.

Michael De Lasaux, UC Cooperative Extension and Boardmember of the Plumas County Fire Safe Council, along with Ryan Tompkins, Plumas National Forest, expressed gratitude to SNC staff for assistance with the application process for this grant. Tompkins also expressed gratitude to the Board for the consideration of this project.

Lee Fledderjohann, Collins Pine Company out of Lakeview, Oregon, expressed his appreciation for consideration of Project #867, Barry Point Fire Ecosystem Restoration Project. Fledderjohann informed the Board that this project is in conjunction with the Modoc National Forest and is an all-encompassing project to restore the Barry Point fire project.

Action: Boardmember Bob Kirkwood moved, and Boardmember Pam Giacomini seconded, a motion that the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Sierra Buttes/ Gold Lakes Basin Nonindustrial Timber Management Plan (SNC #864), the Lookout/Upper Pit Watershed Restoration Project (SNC #865), the South Fork Mokelumne River Watershed Restoration (SNC #885), the Clarks Valley Wildfire Reduction Project (SNC #887), and the Long Gulch Watershed Enhancement Plan (SNC #888); and (b) approve findings concurring in the Negative Declarations and Timber Harvesting Plans, and authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Determination as a Responsible Agency for the American River Headwaters Improvement Project (SNC #841), the Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (SNC #866), the Barry Point Fire Restoration Project (SNC #867), and the Scotts Flat Reservoir Fuels Treatment Phase III (SNC #873); and (c) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Wolf and Grizzly Creek Municipal Watershed Protection Project (SNC #837) may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Negative Declaration and file a Notice of Determination for this project; and (d) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize the staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects. The motion passed with all members voting in favor, with Boardmember Christopher Wright abstaining.

IX. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Sierra Nevada WIP Program Coordinator Mandy Vance acknowledged all of the work by partners and staff that has been taking place in conjunction with the WIP and stated that involvement will be ramping up as the current watershed assessments are completed.

Vance stated SNC is anticipating on receiving the bulk of the data from the ongoing assessments by mid to late summer. Once that information is received, the data will be compiled and taken to partners at the watershed level.

Vance updated the Board on the status of the criteria currently being developed for the WIP pilots. SNC staff will continue to work closely with Boardmember Bob Kirkwood and Boardmember Pam Giacomini to refine these criteria.

Vance also stated that, to date, SNC has received a total of 21 comments regarding the WIP Regional Strategy from a wide variety of stakeholders. Staff is working with other agency partners to obtain specific feedback on the strategy and hopes to post the edited strategy to the SNC website soon.

Vance highlighted a recent Capitol Public Radio Interview featuring SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham; a link to the audio for this interview was shared with the Board. She also shared an International Day of Forests sound clip.

Boardmember Kirkwood expressed his appreciation for SNC staff and the forward progress.

X. Tribal Forum Discussion (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham provided an overview of the tribal meeting that took place the previous day. Representatives from the Pit River and the Fort Bidwell tribes were in attendance, along with Boardmembers Terrence O'Brien and Pam Giacomini. Branham stated that it had been a good opportunity to open dialog with tribal communities. SNC will continue holding meetings with tribal members at future Board meetings in each of the Subregions.

Boardmembers Giacomini and O'Brien both stated they are encouraged that SNC is working to engage the tribes and believe the effort should continue.

XI. Overview of SNC Coordination Efforts with Other Funding Programs (INFORMATIONAL)

Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman provided an overview of the funding coordination and work that has been ongoing with other agencies and partners. Kingman reviewed presentation slides and highlighted Prop. 84 and Prop. 1 investments, highlighting the fact that the Sierra Nevada Region does not get an appropriate share of state funding and SNC is trying to change that disparity. Kingman's presentation also covered SNC technical assistance that is provided to partners, particularly those applying for other state agency funding. Kingman encouraged Boardmembers to visit the SNC website and review the funding opportunities and calendar. Kingman reported that this technical assistance has helped various partners in obtaining funding and serves as an important part of the SNC mission.

The Board provided SNC positive comments, acknowledging the contribution that SNC staff has made with the funding coordination efforts.

XII. Boardmembers' Comments

No Boardmember comments at this time

XIII. Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

XIV. Adjournment

Board Chair BJ Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

Background

California voters passed Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014, on November 4, 2014. Proposition 1 added Section 79731 to the California Water Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds and the legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state. The bond measure included an allocation of \$25 million for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC).

The 2015-16 state budget included an appropriation of \$10 million, which is intended to be awarded over two fiscal years. At the June 2015 Board meeting, the Board approved the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 1 Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16/16-17 Grant Guidelines. The SNC released a request for proposals on July 1, 2015, with the first application deadline of September 1, 2015. The SNC continues to consult with other Proposition 1 funding agencies to maximize the investment of bond funds in the Region.

For the September 1, 2015 deadline, the SNC received 20 applications requesting a total of \$5,516,649.87. To date, the Board has authorized nine grants from the initial submittal totaling \$2,428,498.

For the second round March 1, 2016, deadline, the SNC received 29 applications requesting a total of \$9,027,618.26. The applications received included 20 Category 1 (site improvement) projects and nine Category 2 (planning projects). Prior to evaluation, one application was withdrawn by the applicant and two projects were determined to be incomplete or ineligible. Of the 26 projects evaluated, ten applications representing \$2,937,838 were declined and will have the opportunity to consult with SNC staff regarding possible reapplication, eight grants totaling \$2,269,782 were authorized at the June Board Meeting, three remain under evaluation and may be recommended for authorization at the December Board Meeting pending completion of CEQA, and five grants totaling \$2,028,722 are being recommended for funding at this meeting.

Three of the projects authorized for funding at the June 2016 Board Meeting were determined to have directly addressed needs identified in the Governor's Emergency Proclamation about Tree Mortality and were awarded \$568,444 out of the \$1 million Tree Mortality apportionment that was approved by the SNC Board at the March 2016 Board Meeting.

To date, the SNC Board has authorized 17 Proposition 1 projects totaling \$4,698,280.

The third application deadline is September 1, 2016. Applications submitted by this deadline will be processed by SNC staff and reviewed by the evaluation team. Those applications meeting the scoring threshold for recommendation will be presented to the SNC Board for consideration at future Board meetings.

Current Status

Staff will continue to evaluate and conduct CEQA analysis for all remaining March 2016 applications with the intent to bring additional recommendations in December.

Staff is recommending that the Board make the necessary CEQA findings and authorize five grants totaling \$2,028,722 for applications received in March 2016.

Please see [Table 1](#) for details on all March 2016 applications, including links to the complete application packages and CEQA documentation.

March 2016 Applications Recommended for Funding

- [Project #851](#) proposed by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority – Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project, with Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency, based on review of the Negative Declaration approved by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority. Located on the Calaveras Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest in Calaveras County, this project proposes to treat 971 acres that are part of the 14,075 acre Hemlock Landscape Restoration Project and the even larger 390,904 acre Cornerstone Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration project. Proposed treatments include hand thinning of small conifers, aspen and meadow restoration, forest restoration following GTR 220 guidelines, plantation thinning, and the construction of 300' wide shaded fuel break along ridge tops, private property, and Highway 4. The restoration treatments are designed to promote ecosystem stability and improve landscape resilience and watershed conditions within the upper headwaters of Blue Creek (that flows into the Mokelumne River) and near Big Meadow Creek (that flows into the North Fork Stanislaus River).
To access the complete application package, [click here](#)
Category 1 Implementation Project - \$500,000
- [Project #852](#) proposed by the Truckee Donner Land Trust – Webber Lake Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Acquired by the Truckee Donner Land Trust in 2012 with financial assistance from a SNC grant, the project site includes 3,000 acres of lake, meadow, and conifer forest habitat, including Webber Lake - the headwater lake of the Little Truckee River. The proposed project will complete a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) that will guide long term management of the overstocked and diseased forest conditions within this watershed and serve as the functional equivalent to CEQA for future activities.
To access the complete application package, [click here](#)
Category 2 Planning Project - \$70,000
- [Project #857](#) proposed by the Plumas County Fire Safe Council – Bucks Lake Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. The project will treat 342.5 acres

located in the Plumas National Forest approximately 15 miles west of Quincy in order to protect and enhance the North Fork Feather Watershed that includes Bucks Lake, Haskins Creek, Mill Creek, Lakeshore, and Pat Maloy Ravine. The North Fork Feather Watershed includes multiple hydropower facilities and is a major supplier of water to Lake Oroville and the California State Water Project. Treatments will include thinning overstocked conditions and represent the last phase of the 1,511 acre Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. Additionally, this project will contribute to a large scale effort by the Plumas National Forest to create landscape level defensible fuel profile zones that have increased resiliency to high intensity wildfires.

To access the complete application package, [click here](#)

Category 1 Site Improvement Project - \$464,025

(Recommended amount reflects a \$23,000 reduction from requested amount due to the removal of an ineligible budget item and corresponding reduction in administrative expenses)

- [Project #882](#) proposed by the Sacramento River Watershed Program – Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Located on 227.5 acres of public land managed by the BLM within the Sacramento River watershed, the project will use forest thinning and low intensity prescribed fire to minimize long term risks of catastrophic fire, control and eradicate invasive species, restore habitat, and demonstrate the linkages between management of upstream areas and the impacts on downstream water availability and quality. Doe Mill Ridge is located between Little Chico Creek and Butte Creek, important suppliers of surface water for municipal and agricultural users via a complex diversion system.

To access the complete application package, [click here](#)

Category 1 Site Improvement Project - \$494,697

- [Project #884](#) proposed by Save the Redwoods League – Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project, with Notice of Exemption from CEQA. Surrounded on three sides by Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBTSP) in Tuolumne County, the project proposes to treat 336 acres owned by the applicant in order to protect the Beaver Creek subwatershed, which drains to the North Fork Stanislaus River and eventually to New Melones Lake. The treatment approach includes non-industrial understory thinning to 200 trees per acre, removal of slash through chipping/mastication, pile and burn, or lop and scatter, and the creation of two fuel breaks that will link open fields and buffer the South Grove of the CBTSP. Long term plans include restoring watershed function, reducing water quality threats posed by wildfires, using prescribed fire for ongoing maintenance, minimizing the risk of high-intensity wildfire, promoting the forest's carbon storage potential, and eventually transferring ownership of the parcel to CBTSP.

To access the complete application package, [click here](#)

Category 1 Site Improvement Project - \$500,000

Attachments

[Table 1](#), [Project Maps](#), Project Descriptions, and CEQA Documentation

Next Steps

Staff will file all necessary adopted CEQA documentation and prepare agreements for each authorized grant. Staff will also update the Board on the number and total amount requested for all new applications submitted on September 1.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Webber Lake Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan (SNC #852), the Bucks Lake Project (SNC #857), Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project (SNC #882), and the Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project (SNC #884); and (b) approve findings in the Negative Declaration, and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency for the Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project (SNC #851); and (c) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize the staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects.

Score	SNC ID#	Organization	Project Title	Amount Requested	County	Subregion
<i>Applications Submitted March 1, 2016 Scoring Above 85 Points Recommended for Authorization:</i>						
89.75	857	Plumas County FSC	Bucks Lake Project	\$ 487,025.00	Plumas	North Central
89.00	851	Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority	Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project	\$ 500,000.00	Calaveras	South Central
86.75	882	Sacramento River Watershed Program	Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project	\$ 494,697.00	Butte	North Central
86.75	884	Save the Redwoods League	Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project	\$ 500,000.00	Tuolumne	South Central
88.50	852	Truckee Donner Land Trust	Webber Lake / Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management	\$ 70,000.00	Sierra	North Central

Subtotal: \$ 2,051,722.00

#857 recommended amount was reduced to \$464,025 after removing ineligible costs and adjusting the administrative expenses

Amount Being Recommended for Authorization: \$ 2,028,722.00

*Applications Submitted **March 1, 2016** Still Undergoing Review*

TBD	853	El Dorado Irrigation District	Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project	\$ 476,709.00	El Dorado	Central
TBD	879	Placer County Resource Conservation District	Post-Fire Restoration in the Rubicon Watershed	\$ 499,902.64	Placer	Central
TBD	880	Yosemite-Sequoia RC&D	Eastern Madera Wildfire Restoration	\$ 488,320.00	Madera	South

Subtotal: \$ 1,464,931.64

*Applications Submitted **March 1, 2016** Determined to be Incomplete/Ineligible:*

TBD	860	Fall River Resource Conservation District	Burney Bioenergy Project Development	\$ 39,200.00	Shasta	North
TBD	886	Calaveras Healthy Forests Impact Product Solutions	BLM Mokelumne Community Forest Crestview/Mitchell Mill Parcels	\$ 189,145.00	Amador	South Central

Subtotal: \$ 228,345.00

Score	SNC ID#	Organization	Project Title	Amount Requested	County	Subregion
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*Applications Submitted **March 1, 2016** Scoring Below 85 Points Not Recommended for Authorization:*

84	861	American Rivers	Pine Creek Forest and Meadow Enhancement Project	\$ 463,738.00	Lassen	North
78.75	868	Fall River Resource Conservation District	Burney Gardens Aspen and Meadow Restoration	\$ 293,000.00	Shasta	North
78.5	870	California Trout	June Mountain Ski Area Whitebark Pine Restoration	\$ 500,000.00	Mono	East
78.25	877	Bear Yuba Land Trust	Independence Trail Vegetation Management and CEQA Studies Planning Project	\$ 75,000.00	Nevada	Central
78	874	Sierra Streams Institute	Lowell Fire Restoration Plan	\$ 75,000.00	Nevada	Central
76.50	881	California Conservation Corps	Rim Fire - Reed Creek Aspen Restoration Project	\$ 476,500.00	Tuolumne	South Central
73.75	878	Sierra County Fire Safe and Watershed Council, Inc.	Calpine WUI Forest Health Project	\$ 233,200.00	Plumas/Sierra	North Central
73.50	862	Lassen County Fire Safe Council	Spooner Reservoir Watershed Restoration Project	\$ 75,000.00	Lassen	North
71.00	876	Truckee River Watershed Council	Forest Health Through Noxious Weed Treatment	\$ 378,900.00	Nevada/Sierra	Central
70.00	875	South Yuba River Citizens League	Targeted Fuel Reduction in the Tahoe National Forest	\$ 367,500.00	Nevada/Placer	Central

Subtotal: \$ 2,937,838.00

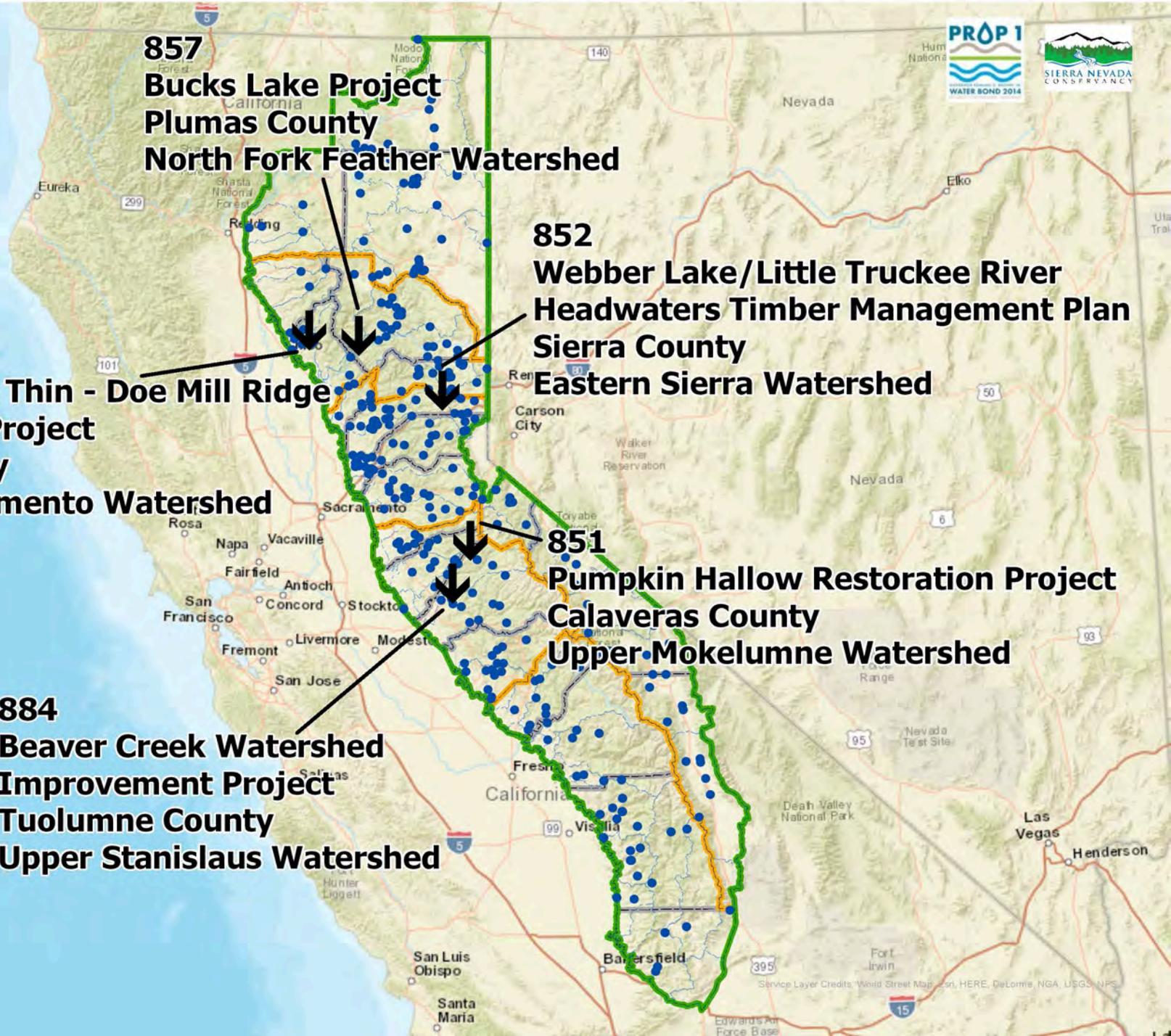
857
Bucks Lake Project
Plumas County
North Fork Feather Watershed

852
Webber Lake/Little Truckee River
Headwaters Timber Management Plan
Sierra County
Eastern Sierra Watershed

882
Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge
Watershed Project
Butte County
Upper Sacramento Watershed

851
Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project
Calaveras County
Upper Mokelumne Watershed

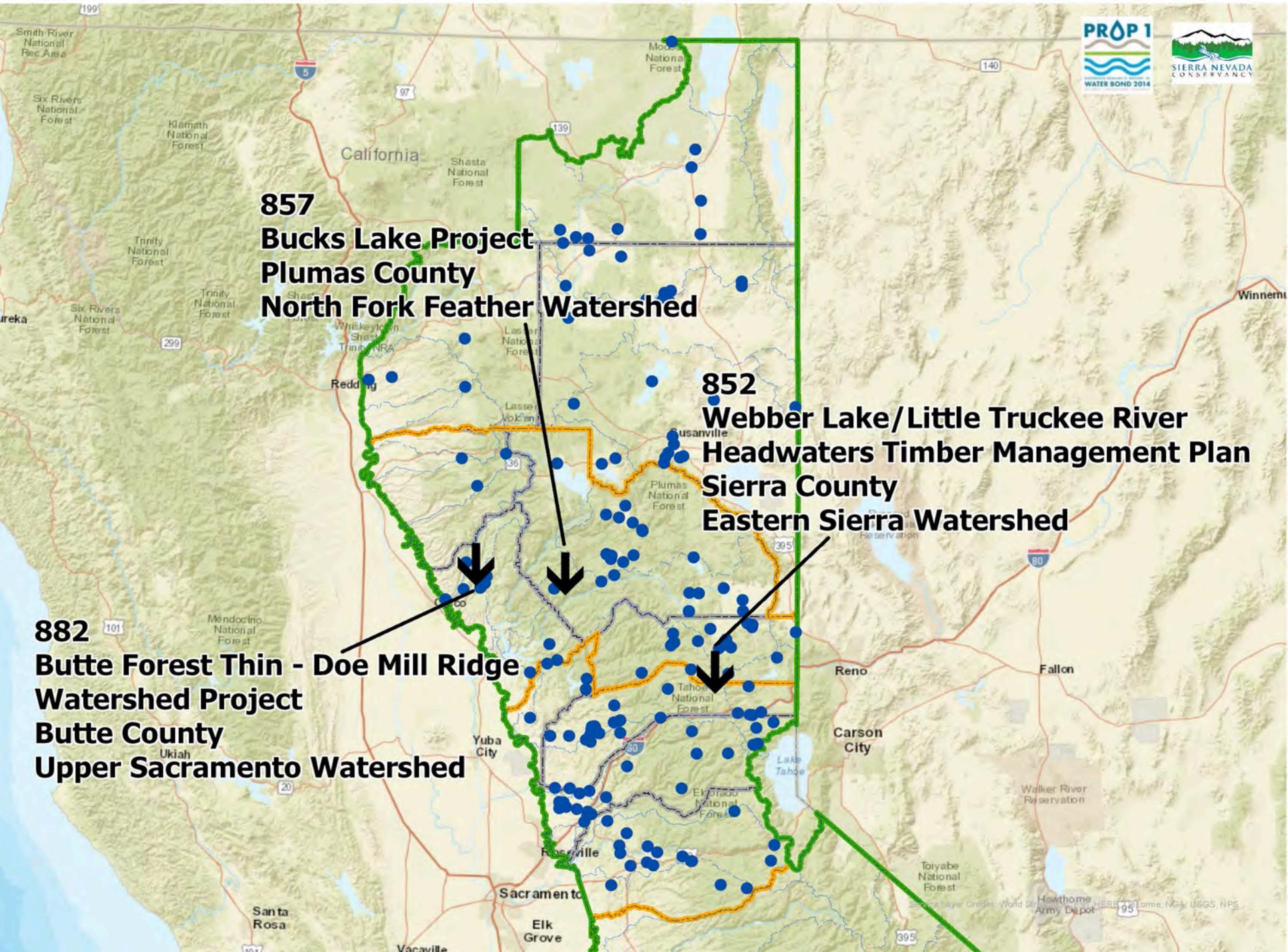
884
Beaver Creek Watershed
Improvement Project
Tuolumne County
Upper Stanislaus Watershed

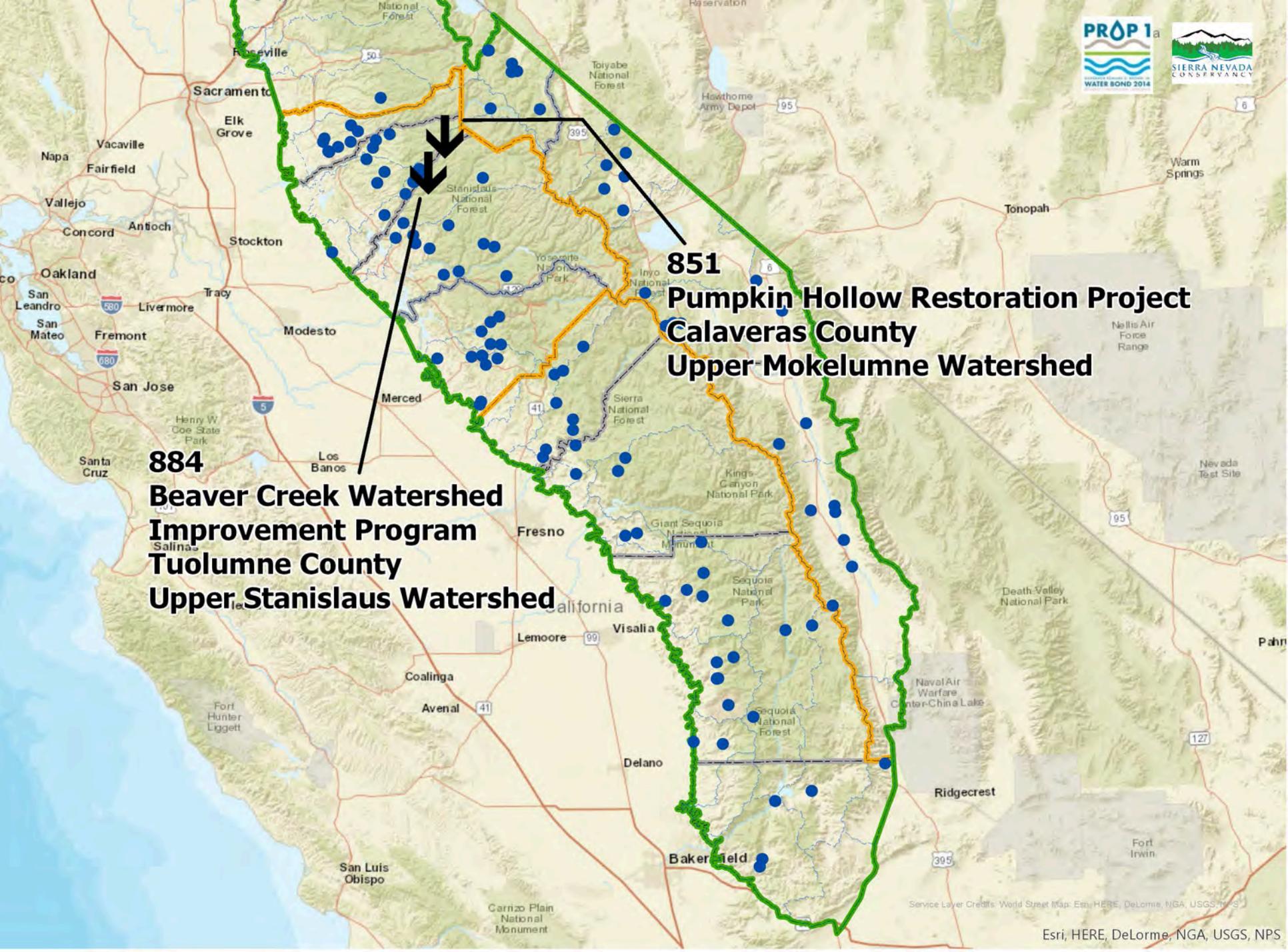


857
Bucks Lake Project
Plumas County
North Fork Feather Watershed

852
Webber Lake/Little Truckee River
Headwaters Timber Management Plan
Sierra County
Eastern Sierra Watershed

882
Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge
Watershed Project
Butte County
Upper Sacramento Watershed





884
Beaver Creek Watershed
Improvement Program
Tuolumne County
Upper Stanislaus Watershed

851
Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project
Calaveras County
Upper Mokelumne Watershed

Agenda Item VI

2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards

Presented by:

Andy Fristensky
Mt. Lassen Area Manager
and
Randi Jorgensen
Mt. Whitney Area Manager

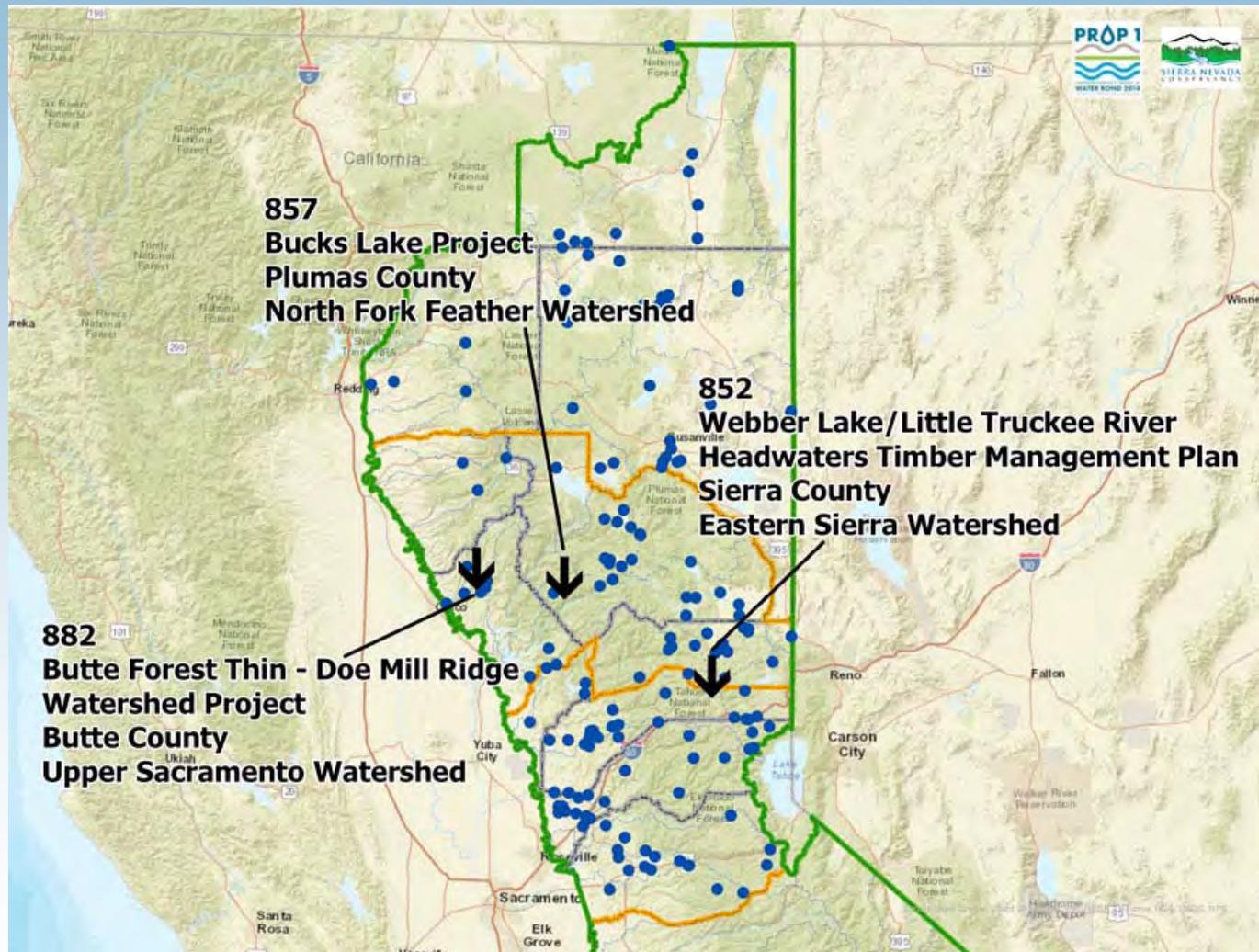
Background

- September 2015 and March 2016: Deadlines for applicants to submit proposals to SNC
- 49 applications were received.
- 24 applications were either withdrawn, ineligible, or not recommended for award.
- 17 grants have been awarded totaling \$4,698,280.
- Five applications totaling \$2,028,722 are being recommended for award at this meeting.
- Three applications are still being evaluated and/or waiting for CEQA review.

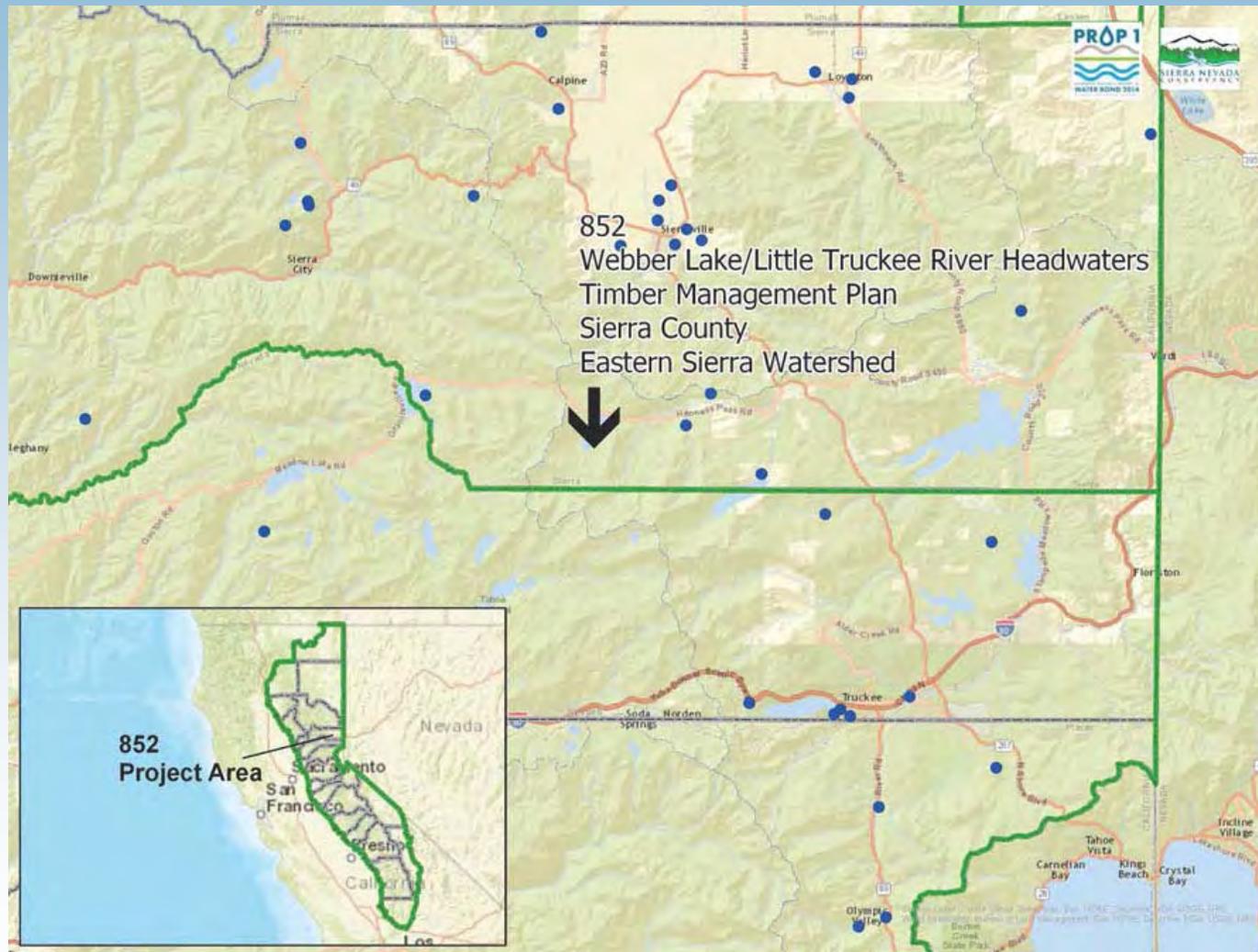
Five projects are being recommended for award totaling \$2,028,722



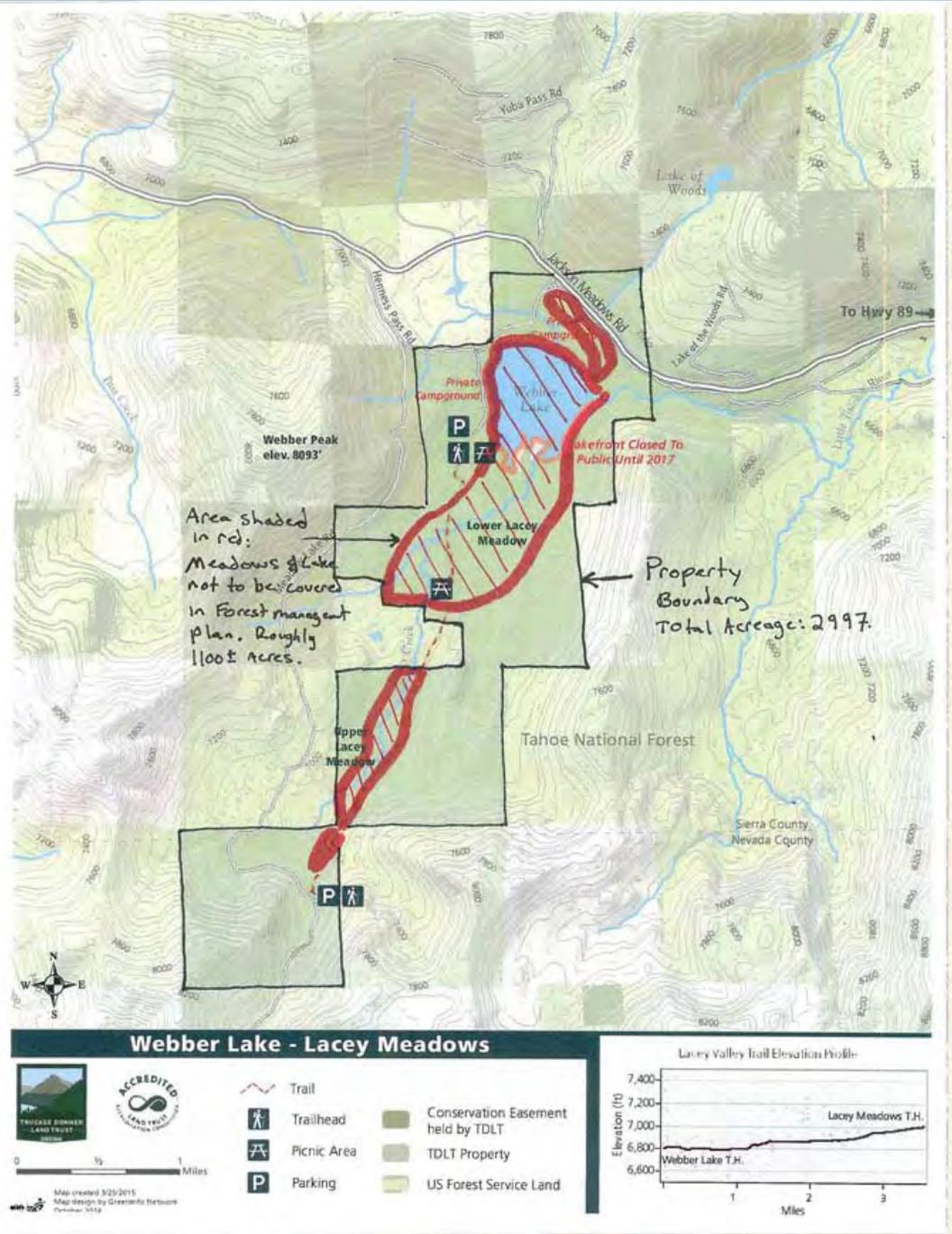
Mt. Lassen Area



Webber Lake/Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan



Webber Lake/ Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan



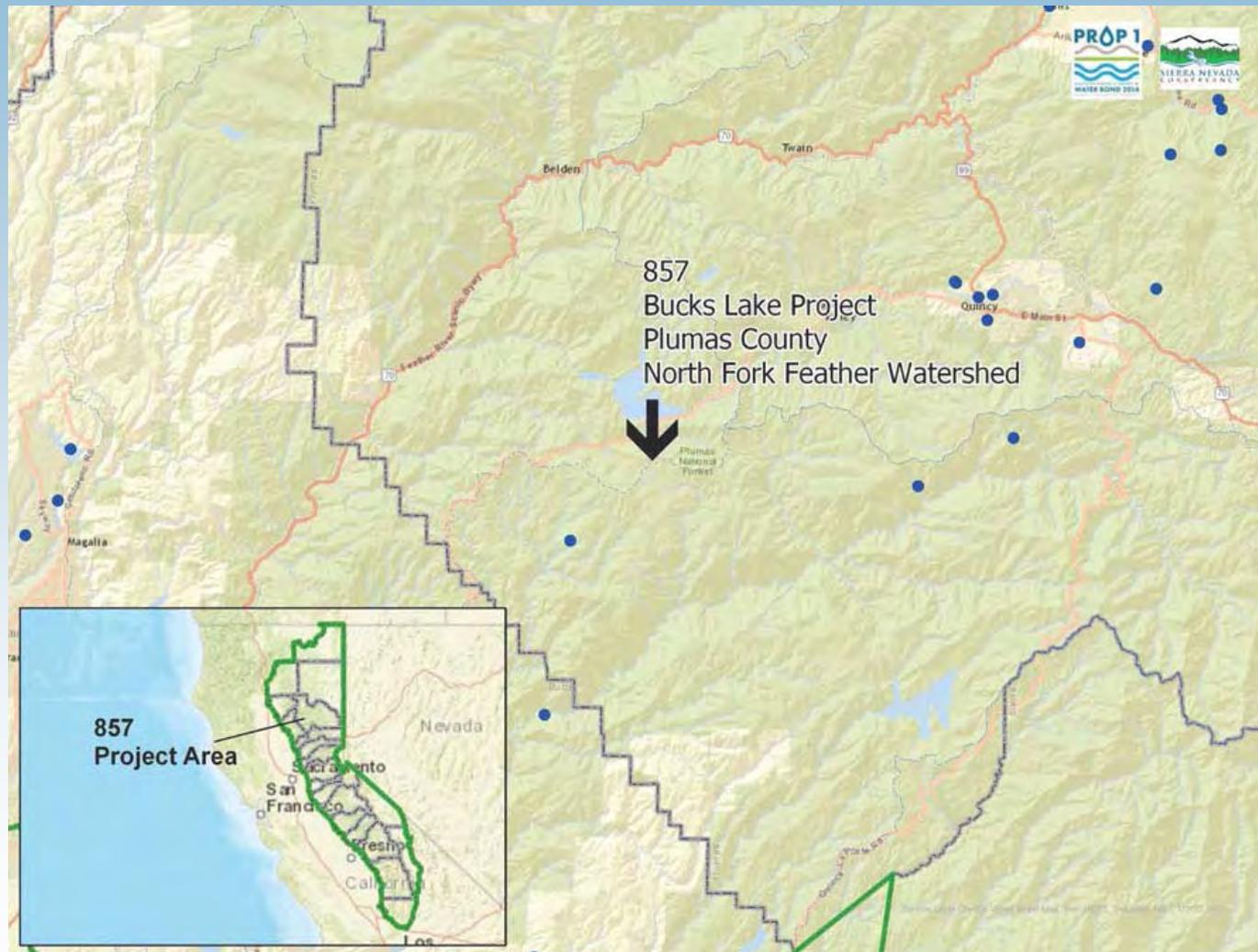
Webber Lake/Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan



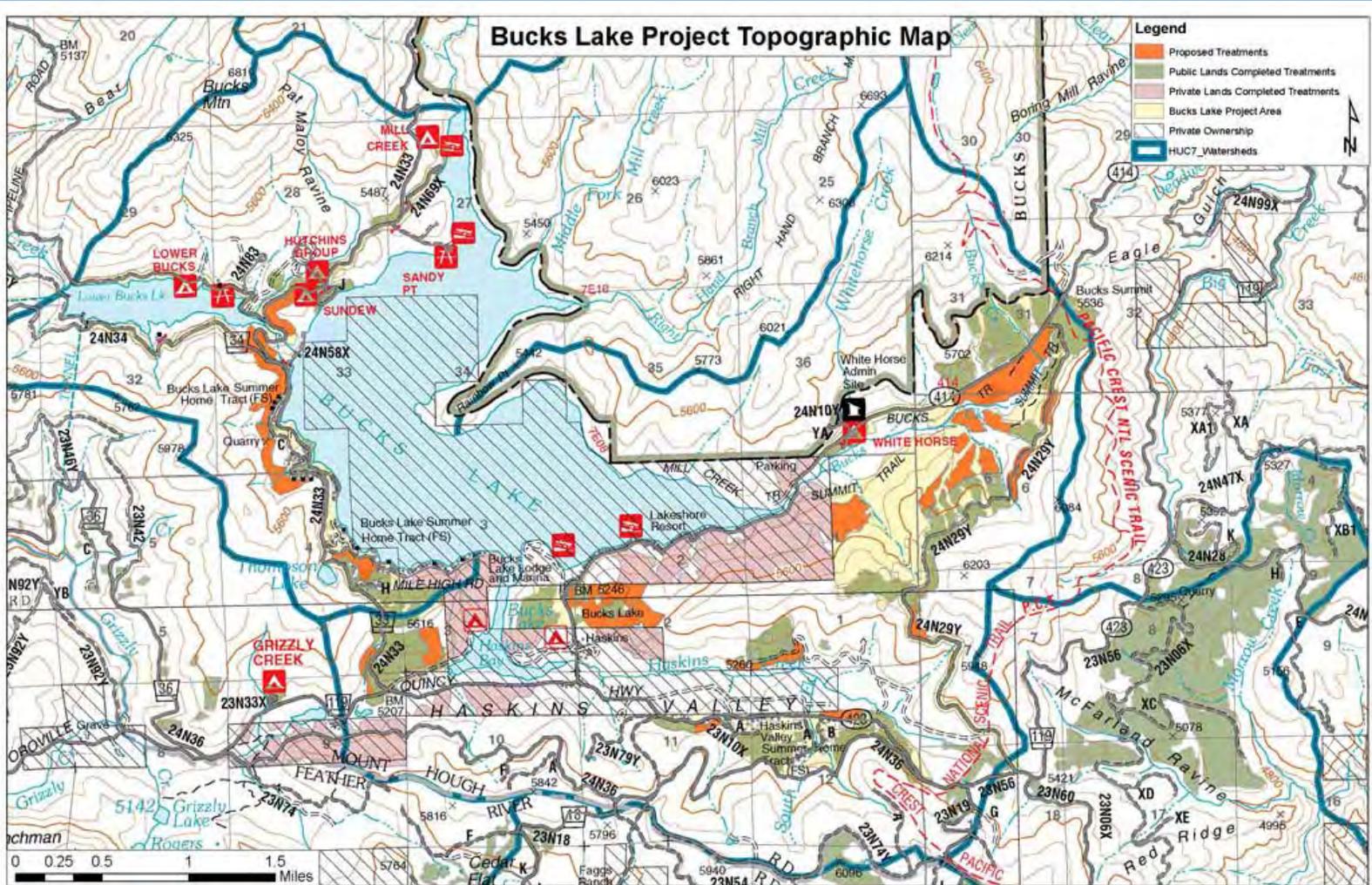
Webber Lake/Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan



Bucks Lake Project



Bucks Lake Project



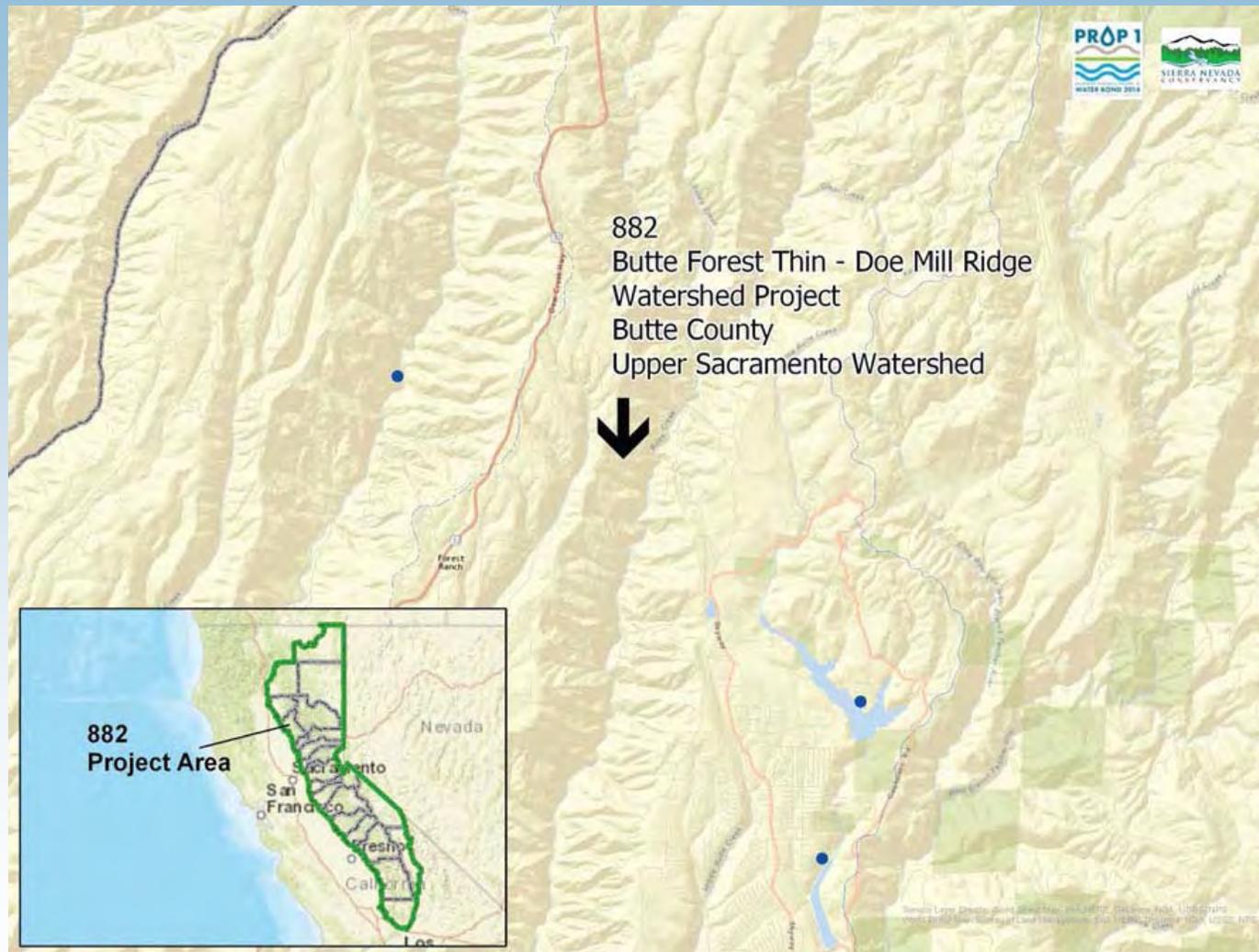
Bucks Lake Project



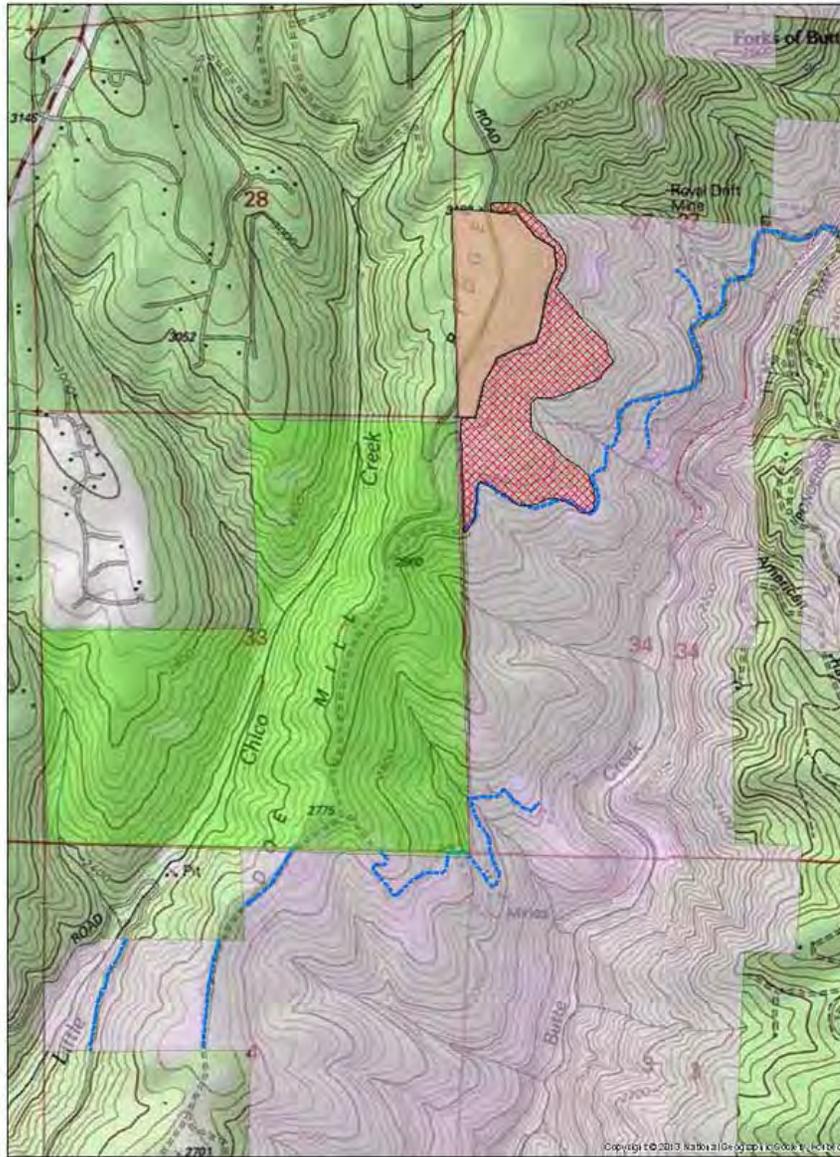
Bucks Lake Project



Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

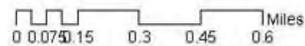


The Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project



Legend

- SPI 2015 Thinning
- Proposed Additional R/Burn Area
- Proposed R/Burn Area
- Trail Shaded Fuel Break
- Road Shaded Fuel Break
- BLM 2014a2 Holdings



Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

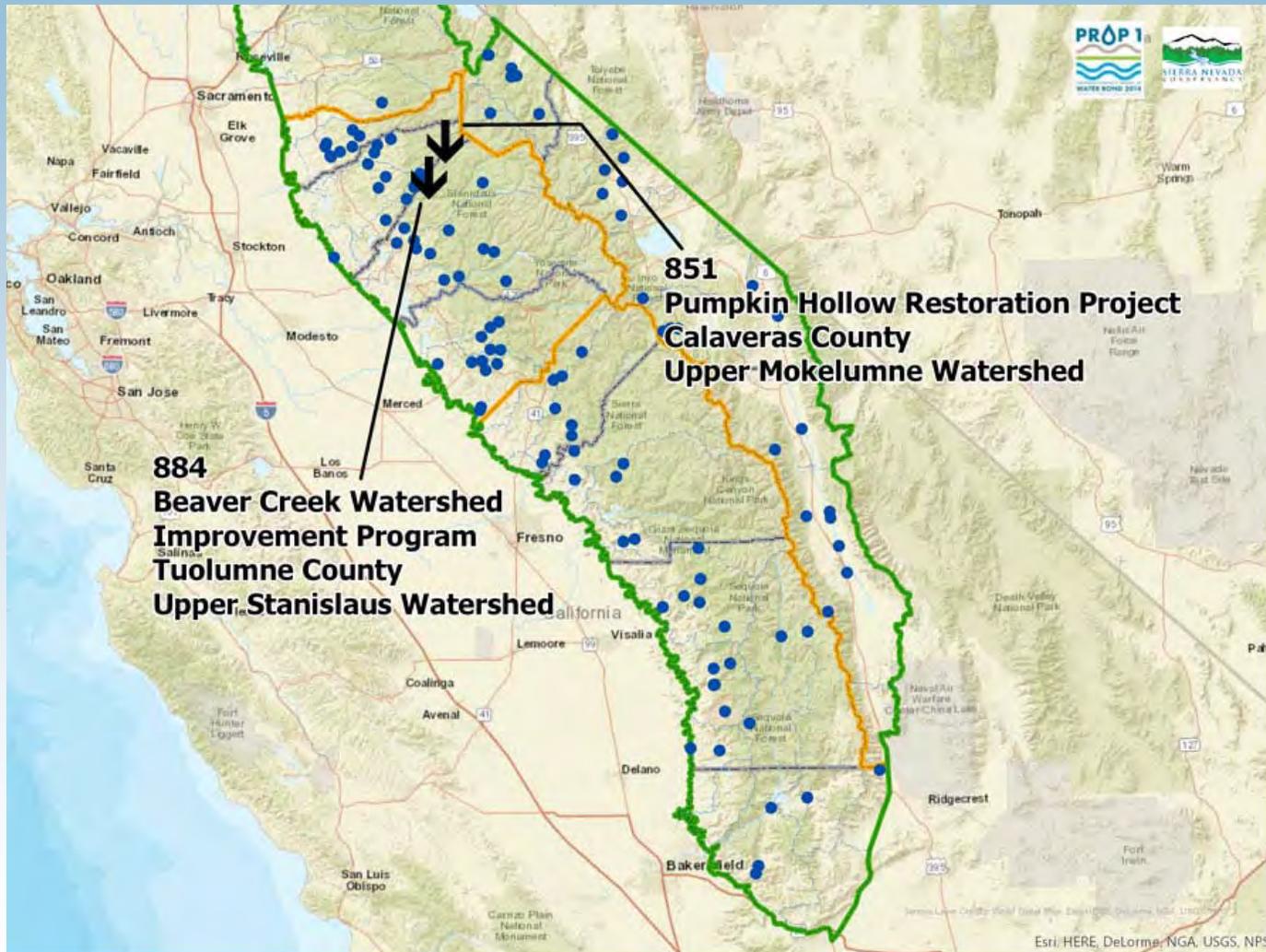


Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

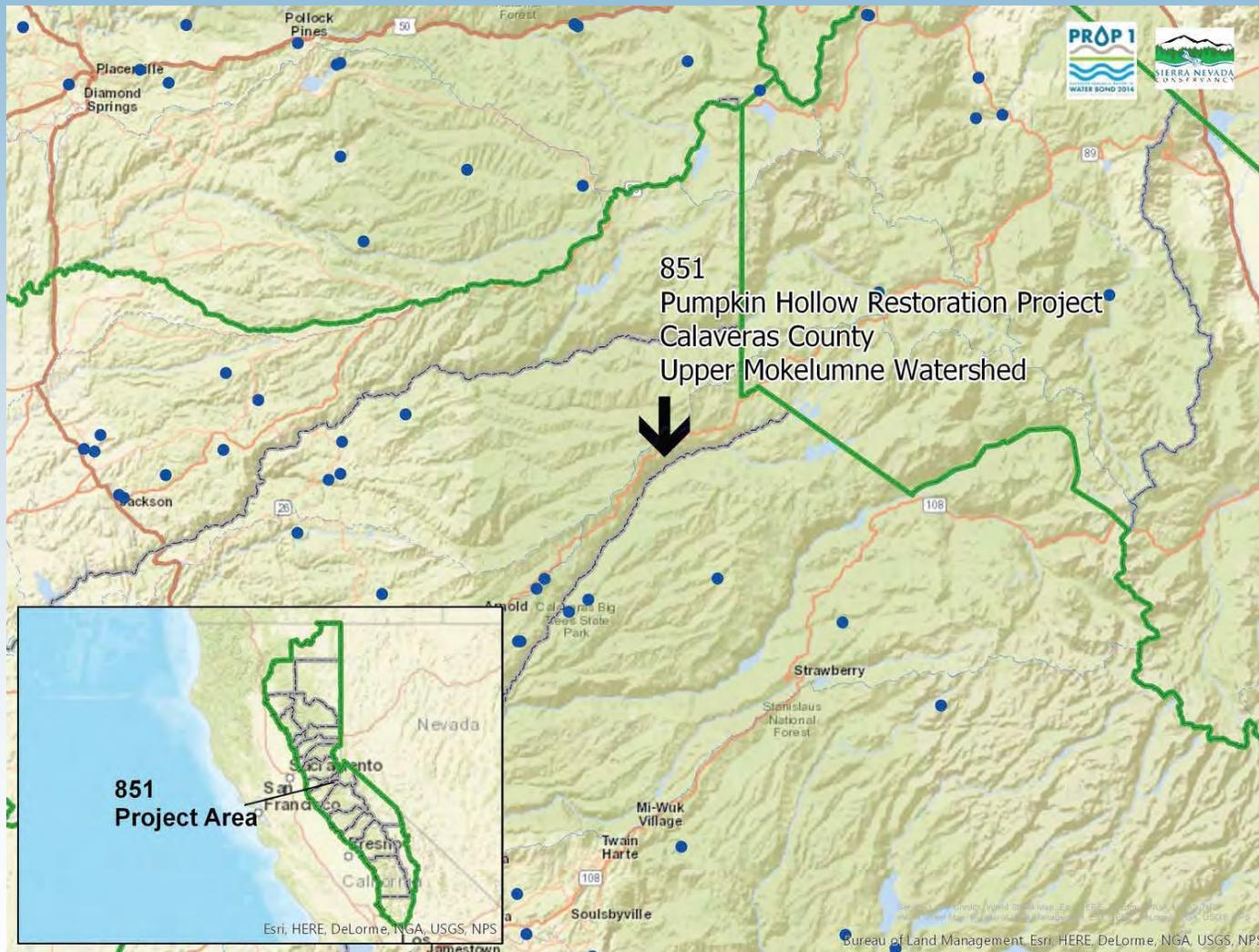


Questions?

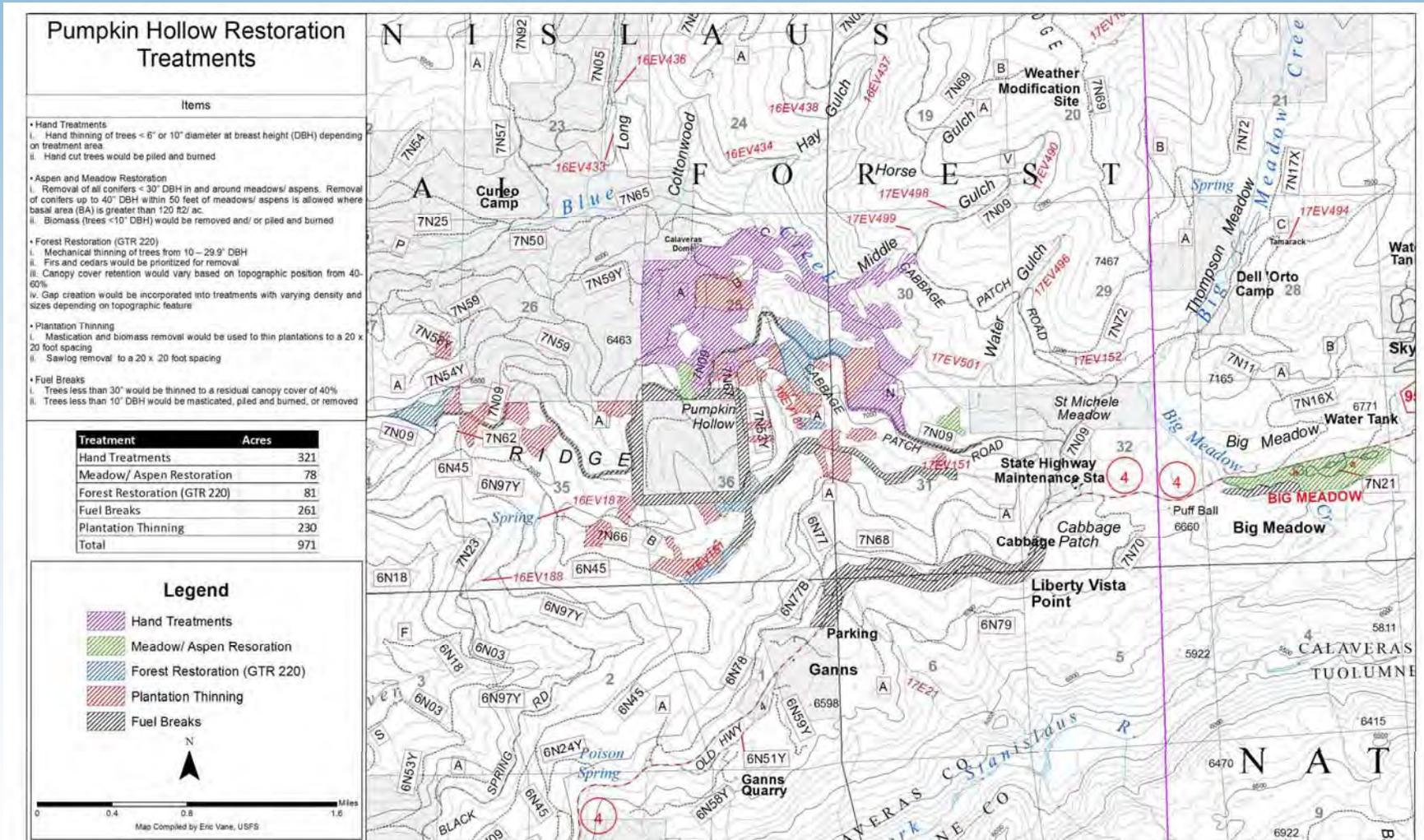
Mt. Whitney Area



Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project



Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project



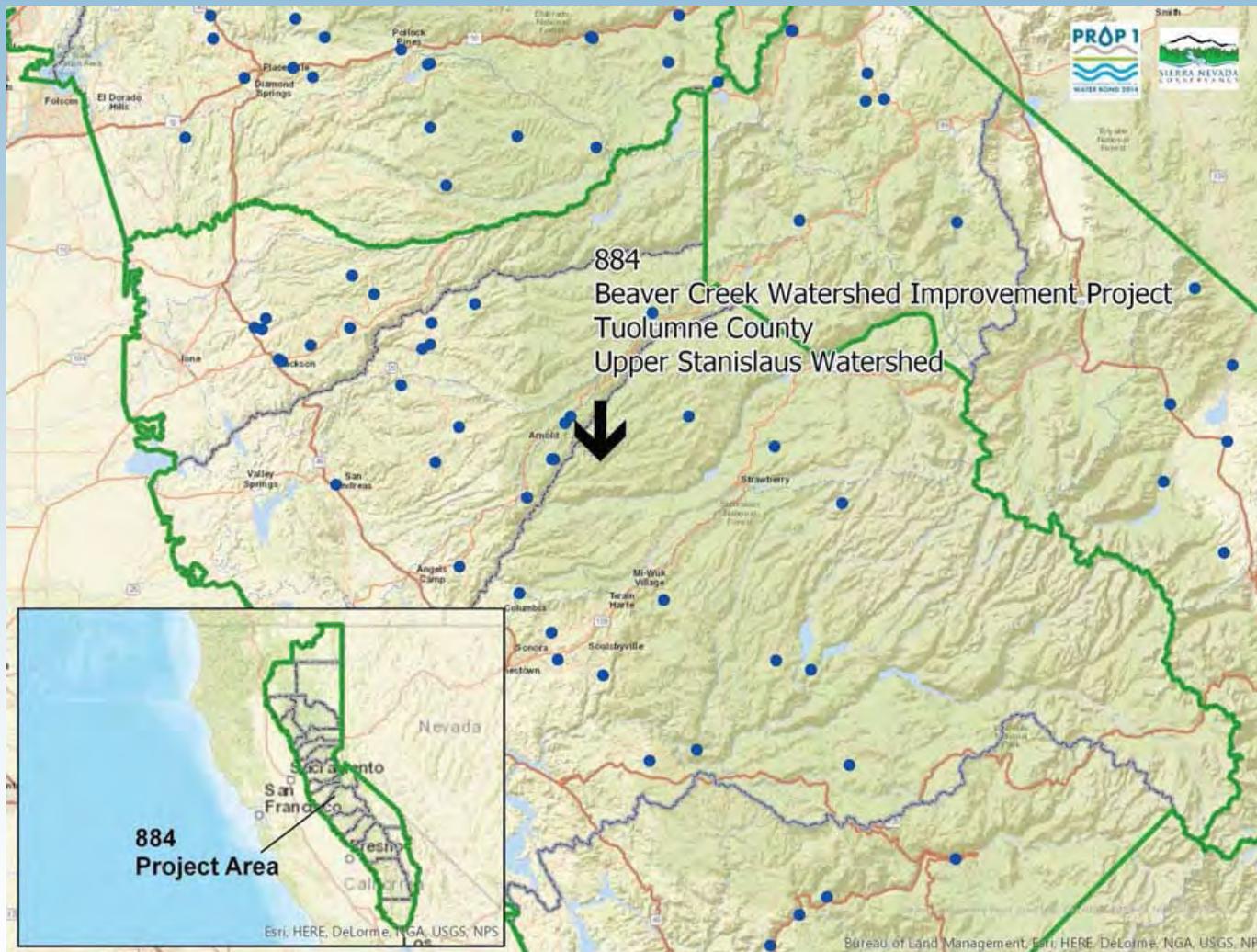
Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project



Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project



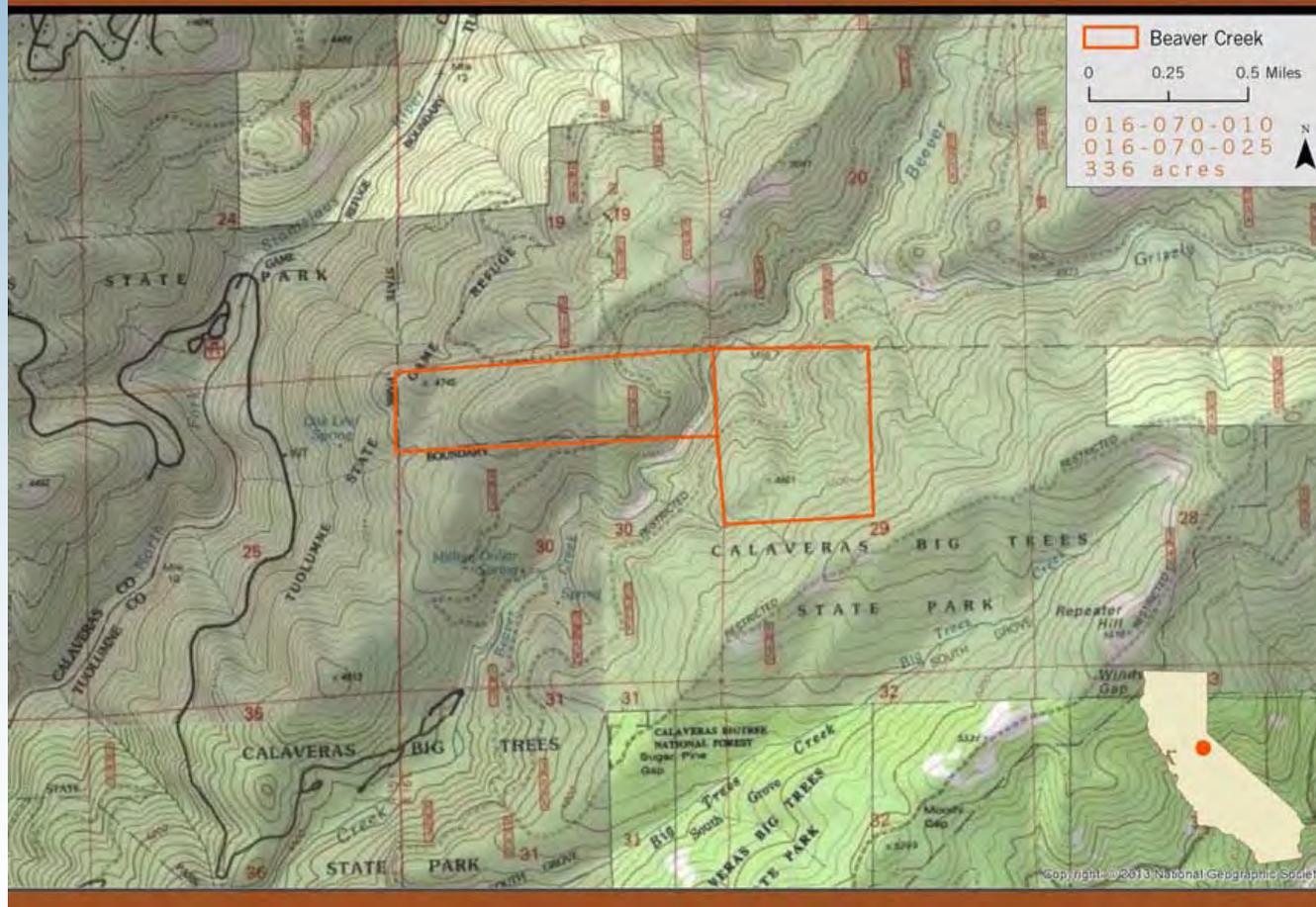
Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project



Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project

Save The Redwoods
LEAGUE®

Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project
Tuolumne County



Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project



Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project



Questions?

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Webber Lake Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan (SNC #852), the Bucks Lake Project (SNC #857), the Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project (SNC #882), and the Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project (SNC #884);

Recommendation

and (b) approve findings in the Negative Declaration, and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency for the Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project (SNC #851);

Recommendation

and (c) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize the staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects.



851
Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project
Calaveras County
Upper Mokelumne Watershed



Esri, HERE, DeLorme, NGA, USGS, NPS

Bureau of Land Management, Esri, HERE, DeLorme, NGA, USGS, NPS

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority

Project Title: Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project

Subregion: South Central

County: Calaveras

SNC Funding: \$500,000

Total Project Cost: \$827,499

Application Number: 851

Final Score: 89.0

PROJECT SCOPE

The Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project is located within the headwaters of the Mokelumne and Stanislaus rivers within the Highway 4 corridor. The 971-acre project, located in the Calaveras Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest, lies within a diverse landscape between the elevations of 6,100 and 7,300 feet and spans through sierran mixed conifer and red-fir dominated forestland. This region is considered a high-priority area for restoration due to dense, overstocked, and homogenous forest conditions. The project area includes alpine meadow systems with small aspen stands, intersections with private land boundaries, the Ebbets Pass Scenic Corridor, and multiple pine plantations.

Fuel breaks will be installed to protect the interface between private and public lands, as well as to provide fire protection along State Highway 4 and major forest roads in the area. Forest restoration and fuel reduction operations include a combination of mechanical thinning with mastication and hand treatments. Meadow and aspen stand treatments will focus on removing encroaching conifers to allow aspen propagation. Areas within the project boundaries that are nesting grounds for northern spotted owls and goshawks will be treated by hand in accordance with the Stanislaus National Forest Land Management Plan. Any fuels from these treatments not masticated will be piled and burned. All forest treatments are designed to increase forest resiliency to drought and pest infestations.

The US Forest Service, who will be providing the matching funds for the project, have developed this project as a subset of the larger, Hemlock Landscape Restoration

Project and the Cornerstone Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). The Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project is the product of a collaborative forest management effort assembled by over 30 stakeholders who make up the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group. The SNC helped initiate this collaborative effort and has provided support in a number of instances to further progress on this effort. This high level of collaboration is one of the cornerstones of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) and also aligns with the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
6-month Progress Report	Mar & Sep 2017 Mar & Sep 2018 Mar 2019
Layout and Tree Marking	Oct – Dec 2016 Mar – Dec 2017 Mar – Dec 2018
Hand Thinning	Oct – Dec 2016 Mar – Dec 2017 Mar – Dec 2018
Mechanical Thinning	June – Dec 2017 June – Dec 2018
Pile Burns	Dec 2016 – Mar 2017 Dec 2017 – Mar 2018 Dec 2018 – Mar 2019
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	June 2019

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
Hand Treatments	\$66,000
Mechanical thinning and Mastication	\$326,000
Procurement and Accounting	\$30,000
Environmental Scientist (Monitoring, reporting, quality control)	\$29,000
Monitoring, Reporting and Invoicing	\$19,000
Sub-Total	\$470,000
Administrative**	\$30,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$500,000

- * Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.
- ** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Jeanne Higgins, Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest
 - Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include one to three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Determination

Appendix D

To:

Office of Planning and Research
U.S. Mail: _____ Street Address: _____
P.O. Box 3044 1400 Tenth St., Rm 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 Sacramento, CA 95814

County Clerk
County of: _____
Address: _____

From:

Public Agency: _____
Address: Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
Contact: Patrick Eidman
Phone: (530) 823-4689

Lead Agency (if different from above): _____
Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority
Address: 15083 Camanche Parkway S.
Valley Springs, CA 95252
Contact: Rob Alcott
Phone: (707) 785 - 1008

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): N/A, Calaveras County Filing No. NOD-1809

Project Title: Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project

Project Applicant: Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority

Project Location (include county): Calaveras County, CA; centered at 38°25'14"N and 120°9'32"W.

Project Description:

The Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMRWA) requests \$500,000 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to implement the Pumpkin Hollow Restoration Project (Project). The Project involves forest management activities on 971 acres of the Stanislaus National Forest to reduce wildfire risk, to prevent insect and disease outbreaks, to improve forest and watershed resiliency, and to improve water quality. Project activities would include hand and mechanical forest treatments for forest and wildlife restoration, aspen and meadow restoration, plantation thinning, and construction of fuel breaks. The project includes site sensitive treatments to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat, and a comprehensive suite of Best Management Practices to protect water quality and avoid potential erosion impacts. SNC has reviewed the Initial Study and Negative Declaration prepared by the UMRWA for the Project, and has independently determined that the Project would not result in significant adverse environmental impacts.

This is to advise that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has approved the above
(Lead Agency or Responsible Agency)

described project on _____ and has made the following determinations regarding the above
(date)
described project.

1. The project **will not** have a significant effect on the environment
2. A Negative Declaration **was** prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA
3. Mitigation measures **were not** a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan **was not** 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 Negative Declaration and record of project approval is available to the General Public at:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy, 11521 Blocker Dr #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.

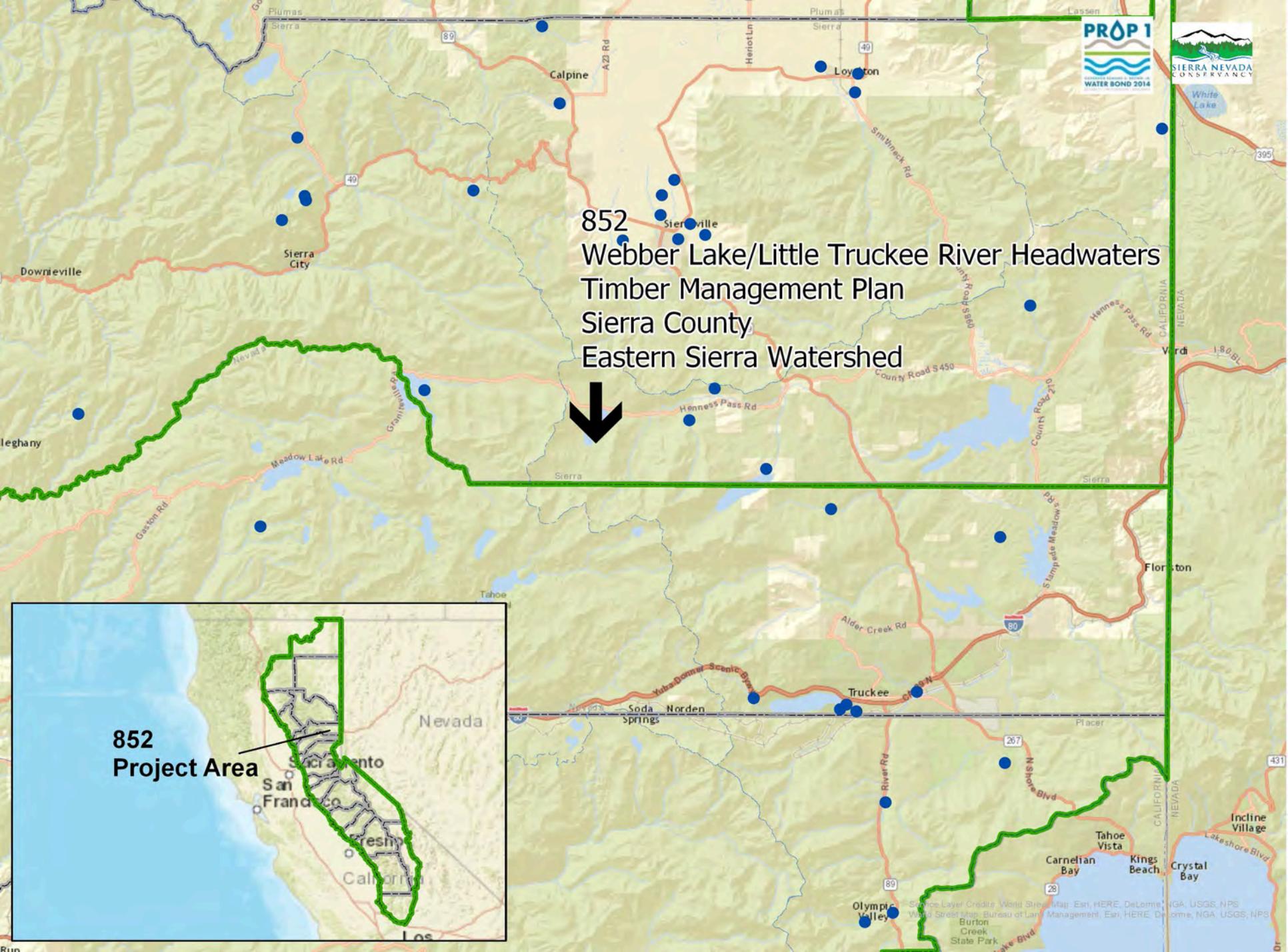
Revised 2011

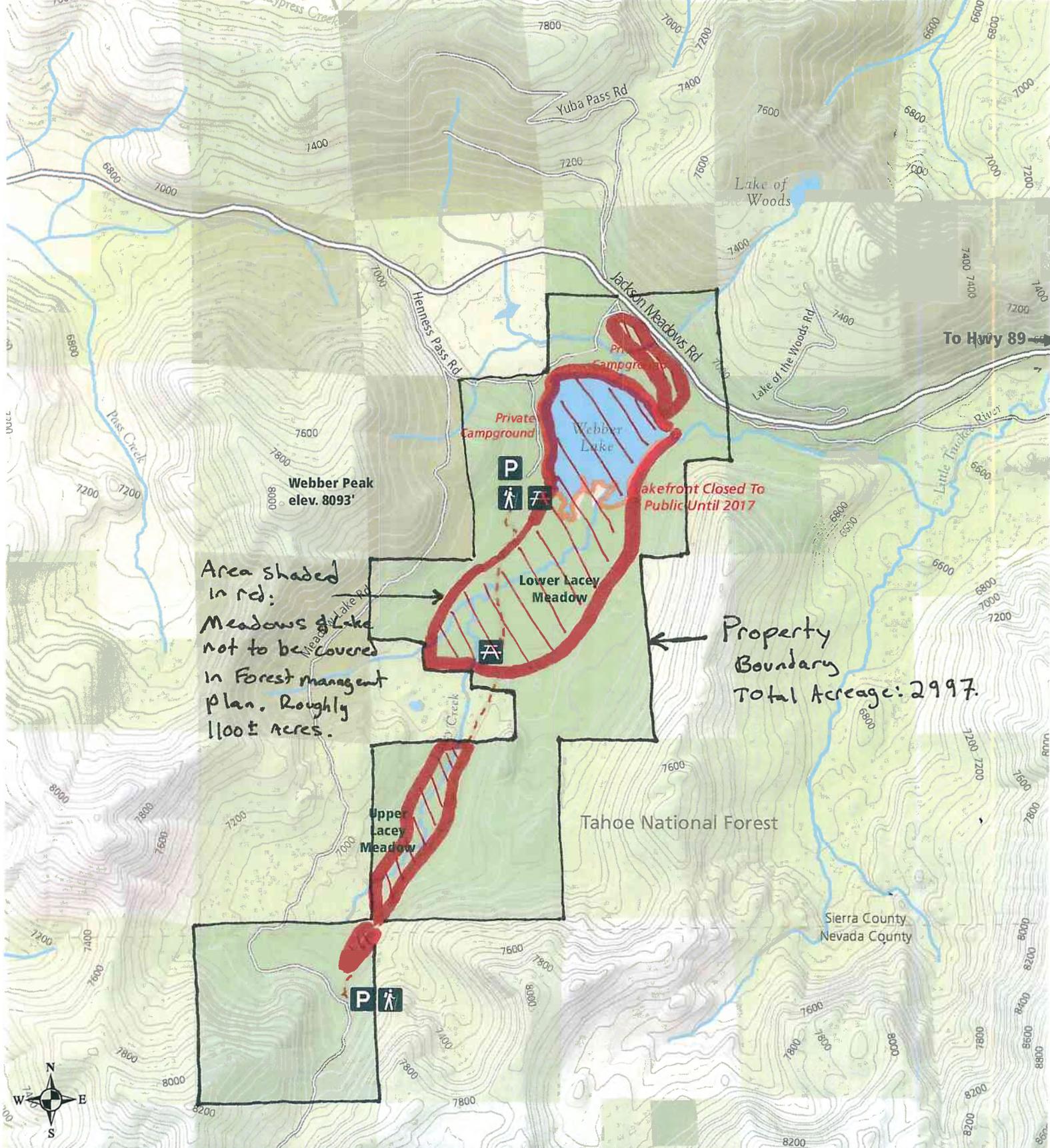


852
Webber Lake/Little Truckee River Headwaters
Timber Management Plan
Sierra County
Eastern Sierra Watershed

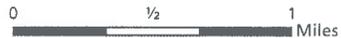
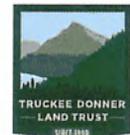


852
Project Area



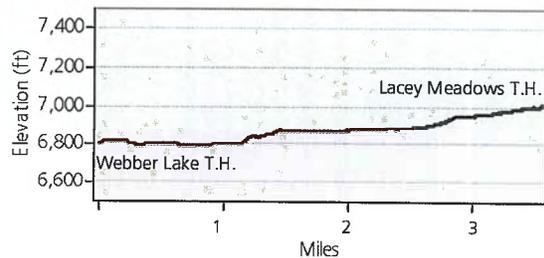


Webber Lake - Lacey Meadows



- Trail
- Trailhead
- Picnic Area
- Parking
- Conservation Easement held by TDLT
- TDLT Property
- US Forest Service Land

Lacey Valley Trail Elevation Profile



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Truckee Donner Land Trust

Project Title: Webber Lake/Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan

Subregion: North Central

County: Sierra

SNC Funding: \$70,000.00

Total Project Cost: \$70,000.00

Application Number: 852

Final Score: 85.5

PROJECT SCOPE

The Webber Lake and Lacey Meadows complex (consisting of lake, meadow, and conifer forest lands) is located within the headwaters of the Little Truckee River, north of the town of Truckee, in Sierra County. This area is one of a complex of forests, meadows, lakes, and streams that together form a wide complex of iconic landscapes, recreational assets, and ecosystem services for California. In 2012, the SNC, along with other partners, assisted in the conservation acquisition of 3,000 acres of this largely intact ecosystem and natural resource. The Little Truckee River provides clean source water to consumers downstream, as well as through a diversion leading to agricultural interests in Sierra Valley, within the Feather River Basin.

The forest in this watershed suffers from overstock, disease, and an interruption of the natural fire cycle. Lodgepole pine encroaches into meadows, and overgrown upland timber stands need to be aggressively thinned to minimize disease and recent increases in tree mortality due to bark beetle infestations. These factors result in the urgent need to minimize the threat and consequences of catastrophic wildfire to the Webber complex and possible spread of fire and beetle damage to adjacent healthier watershed systems.

The Truckee Donner Land Trust (TDLT) will contract with a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) to assess the property and create a long-term Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) approved by CAL FIRE, to inform future forest management activities on approximately 1,900 acres. The NTMP will identify critical areas for treatment, and allow the TDLT to begin work immediately, using available funding. Additional work identified in the NTMP will be implemented as funding is secured.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS & DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
RPF initial work completed: NDDDB & CHRIS reports ordered, GIS analysis of the lands and initial site visits (Mapping)	March – June 2017
Draft NTMP report- solicit comments and redraft (report)	June – July 2017
Final draft submitted to CAL FIRE, 30-day comment period (final draft, application)	July – Sep 2017
RPF reviews and responds to comments, NTMP revision and final.	October 2017
Progress Reports (2)	March 1, 2017 September 1, 2017
Final Report and Deliverables Due	December 1, 2017
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	December 1, 2017

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Project Management	\$4,000.00
RPF Contract: field surveys, data processing, NTMP	\$63,000.00
Administrative**	\$3,000.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$70,000.00

* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - USDA TNF- Sierraville District
 - Truckee River Watershed Council

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include one to three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments

Notice of Exemption

Form D

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

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

(Address)

County Clerk
County of Sierra
100 Courthouse Sq. Room 11 P.O. Drawer D
Downieville, CA 95936

Project Title: Webber Lake Little Truckee River Headwaters Timber Management Plan

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located in Sierra County, California; centered at approximately 39°28'34.74"N and 120°25'22"W

Project Location – City: Truckee, CA

Project Location – County: Sierra

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding to the Truckee Donner Land Trust to contract a Registered Professional Forester to prepare a long-term Non-industrial Timber Management Plan (NTMP) for the Webber Lake/Lacey Meadows property. The Forest Management Plan would be a CEQA-equivalent document subject to interdisciplinary review, and future approval by Cal Fire. The NTMP would guide future forest management activities on the property, after approval by Cal Fire.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Truckee Donner Land Trust

Exempt Status: **(check one)**

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: _____
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: Section 15262, Feasibility and Planning Studies

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project is a planning project that involves environmental analysis, and the preparation of a NTMP to guide possible future forest management actions. The planning project would not involve ground disturbance or physical alterations to the environment. The proposed planning project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262, which relates to feasibility and planning studies for future actions that have not yet been approved.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005



857
Bucks Lake Project
Plumas County
North Fork Feather Watershed

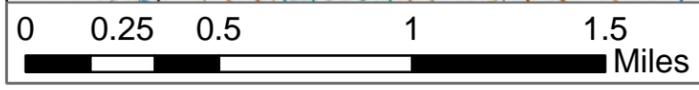
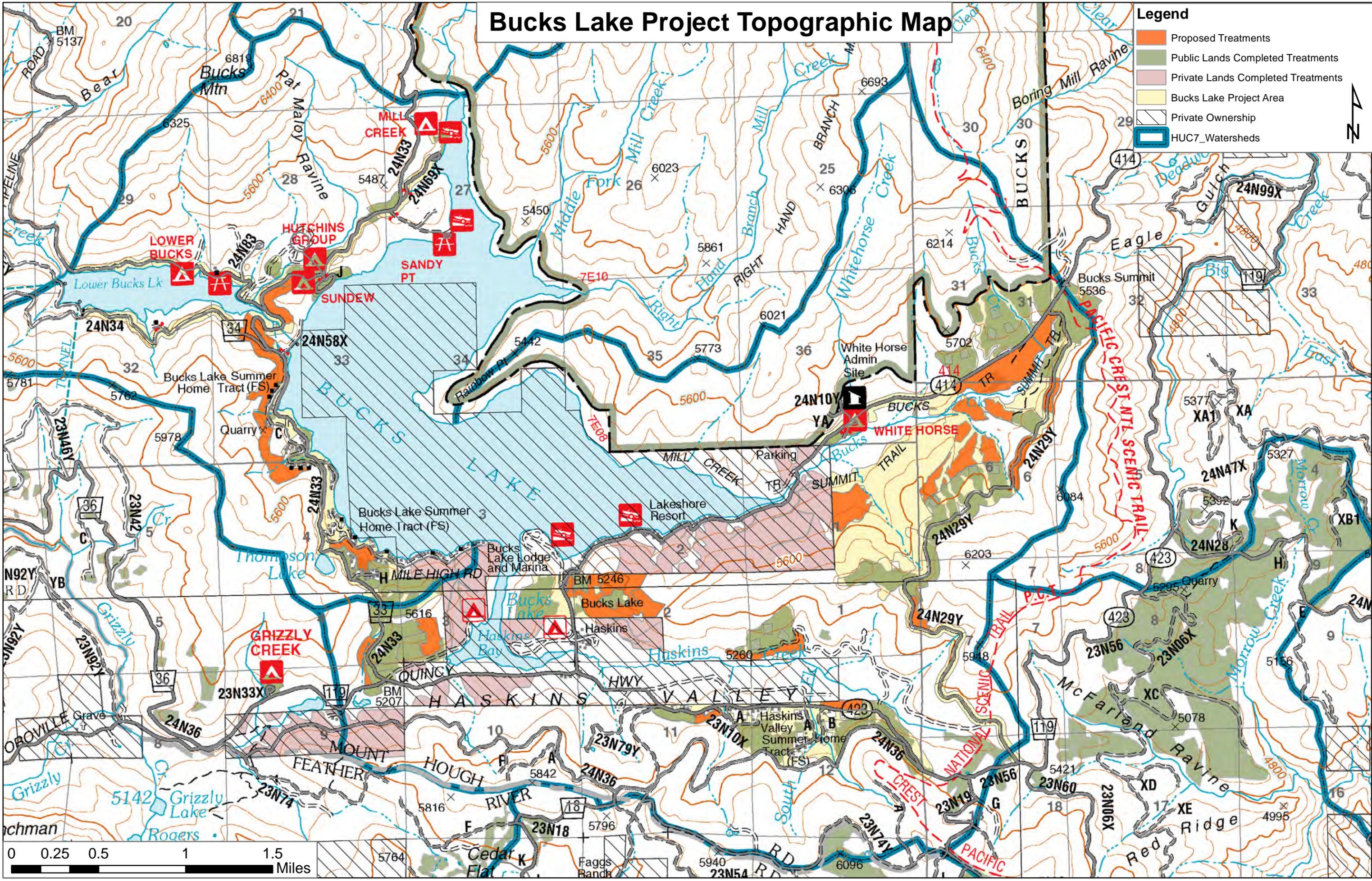


857
Project Area

Bucks Lake Project Topographic Map

Legend

- Proposed Treatments
- Public Lands Completed Treatments
- Private Lands Completed Treatments
- Bucks Lake Project Area
- Private Ownership
- HUC7_Watersheds



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Plumas County Fire Safe Council

Project Title: Bucks Lake Project

Subregion: North Central

County: Plumas

SNC Funding: \$464,025.00

Total Project Cost: \$575,925.00

Application Number: 857

Final Score: 89.75

PROJECT SCOPE

Bucks Lake in Plumas County is 15 miles west of the town of Quincy at an elevation of 5,161 feet. The 1,827 acre lake is surrounded by thick overgrown forests. High elevation snowmelt and precipitation from these watersheds contribute significant amounts of water to the North Fork of the Feather River and powers hydroelectric facilities downstream, along the Feather River canyon.

In order to protect and enhance the surrounding tributary watersheds and their associated water quality and supply, riparian ecosystems, wildlife habitat and recreational values, the Bucks Lake Project will treat 342.5 acres of Plumas National Forest (PNF) land. Methodologies include hand thinning, grapple piling, pile burning, mastication, and follow-up prescribed fire to lighten overstocked conditions. This treatment will be the last phase of the larger 1,511 acre Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. Additionally, this project contributes to a large scale effort by the Plumas National Forest to create landscape level Defensible Fuel Profile Zones (DFPZ) that increase resiliency to high-intensity wildfires. By implementing treatments planned in the Bucks Lake area a strategic healthy forest network will be fully connected, optimizing the benefits of the work that is already completed in the Bucks Lake area and other surrounding DFPZs.

The PNF has committed an in-kind contribution of \$89,000 to implement prescribed burning as a strategy to manage the area more consistent with a natural fire regime.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS & DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Contract solicitation and awards	Oct – Nov 2016
Implementation: hand thinning, grapple piling, mastication, piling. (Pre- and post-project photo points, mapping, as-built maps)	Nov 2016 – Sep 2017
Pile burning and PNF's follow-up prescribed burning (pre- and post-project photo points, mapping)	Sep 2017 – Nov 2018
Six month progress reports (4)	March 1, 2017 September 1, 2017 March 1, 2018 September 1, 2018
Final Report and Deliverables Due	December 1, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	December 1, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
Project Management	\$5,000.00
Implementation (hand thin, grapple pile, mastication)	\$398,500.00
Administrative**	
Administrative Costs	\$60,525.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$464,025.00

* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Plumas County Board of Supervisors
 - Feather River Stewardship Coalition

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include one to three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Exemption

Form D

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

From: (Public Agency) _____

County Clerk
County of _____

(Address)

Project Title: _____

Project Location - Specific: _____

Project Location – City: _____ Project Location – County: _____

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project: _____

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: _____

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: _____

Exempt Status: **(check one)**

Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);

Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));

Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));

Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: _____

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt: _____

Lead Agency
Contact Person: _____ Area Code/Telephone/Extension: _____

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.

2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 857
Bucks Lake Project

Description of Activities

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council seeks funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program for site improvement/restoration activities on approximately 342.5 acres of federal land in the Plumas National Forest. The proposed project is the remaining piece of the larger Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project which includes 1,511 acres of forest management activities, 13 miles of road improvements for watercourse and watershed protection, and 1,500 feet of watercourse restoration. This project was evaluated by Plumas National Forest in the Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment, which found the project would not have significant adverse environmental effects. The proposed Bucks Lake Project will complete this comprehensive large-scale forest restoration project.

The purpose of the Bucks project is to protect and enhance the watersheds of Bucks Lake, Haskins Creek, Lakeshore, and Pat Maloy Ravine through forest restoration treatments. This area is a water source vital to renewable energy creation and the State Water Project. By treating the remaining 342.5 acres of the Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, water quality will be preserved, timing of flows will be maintained or improved, and the severity of damage from potential wildfire will be greatly mitigated. The areas that will be treated are within immediate proximity to the wildland-urban interface of the Quincy, CA community.

The proposed project area consists of three treatment methods:

- 251.4 acres of hand thinning and piling including a 60-acre aspen stand
- 74.6 acres of grapple piling
- 16.5 acres of mastication

Hand thin units will have trees less than 8" DBH removed, hand piled, piles burned and understory burning during the next burn season, weather and resources permitting. Grapple piling units will include piling exiting ground fuels with the cutting and piling of trees less than 8" DBH. Piles will be burned. The mastication unit will involve masticating brush and trees under 8" DBH, leaving trees on a 25-30-foot spacing and retaining all hardwoods over 3" DBH. Aspen Units will be hand thinned, removing conifers under 8" DBH with removal of the downed material. Prescribed fire and pile burning will be utilized to bring the land into balance with a more natural fire regime, releasing the dormant seed bank, and better preparing the land for the chance of withstanding a wildfire.

The project includes resource protection measures to reduce or avoid potential adverse environmental effects, which can be found in the Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment: http://data.ecosystemmanagement.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=18963.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Bucks Lake Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition

of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The minor land alterations proposed by the project involve the hand thinning and mastication of brush and trees less than 8 inches dbh, and pile grappling exiting ground fuels of trees less than 8 inches dbh, which will result in improved forest health and reduced fire risk on approximately 342.5 acres. This forestry work will not result in significant adverse impacts.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief rationale as to why each exception does not apply to the Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
<p>(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.</p>	<p>The goals of this approximately 342.5-acre forestry project are to restore health to the forested areas near the community of Quincy, CA, preventing catastrophic wildfires and protecting drinking water supplies, and improving downstream aquatic resources.</p> <p>The project work consists of minor land alterations involving the removal of brush and small trees by hand crews and masticators. The project work will not occur on areas known to contain hazardous substances, nor will project activities occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources.</p>
<p>(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.</p>	<p>The proposed project was evaluated by the Plumas National Forest as part of the larger Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project Environmental Assessment, which evaluated the cumulative impacts of a larger project area, including 1,511 acres of forest management activities, 13 miles of road improvements for watercourse and watershed protection, and 1,500 feet of watercourse restoration. The Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project EA determined that the project would not adversely affect environmental resources, and would therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other projects in the region. The project would result in beneficial effects to the region’s forests, creeks, watersheds, associated lands, and adjacent neighborhoods by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and</p>

	<p>protection. Consequently, the proposed project, in combination with other nearby forest management treatments, would not result in significant cumulative impacts.</p>
<p>(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>The site improvement/restoration project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p>Aesthetics. See Recreation and Scenic Resources.</p> <p>Agriculture/ Forestry. The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources; consequently, the project will have no impact on agricultural resources. The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on approximately 342.5 acres by thinning dense conifer stands, thereby helping to protect these forest resources from catastrophic wildfire. Project activities are expected to have a minor effect on the distribution of forestry vegetation.</p> <p>Air Quality/GHGs. Forest treatments involving burning would be conducted under smoke management plans and permits obtained by Plumas NF staff that would dictate the quantity, duration, and conditions under which burning could occur. Smoke monitoring would take place and ignition suspended if poor conditions develop. Nearby sensitive receptors will not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations; however, smoke would likely be visible from some communities during burning. Dust emissions from vehicle traffic would be spread out over time, and controlled by water application. The project will not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and will not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.</p> <p>Biological Resources. No sensitive biological resources will be affected by the project. A biological assessment/biological evaluation (BA/BE) was carried out to assist with evaluation of the project effects on sensitive animals in the EA. The EA concluded that the project would have no effect on the following species: valley elderberry longhorn beetle, California red-legged frog, hardhead minnow, foothill yellow-legged frog, northern leopard frog, pond turtle, greater</p>

sandhill crane, Swainson's hawk, Townsend's big-eared bat, and Western red bat. The project would have an effect on individuals, but not result in a trend toward federal listing, or loss of viability for the following species: mountain yellow-legged frog, willow flycatcher, great grey owl, California spotted owl, northern goshawk, bald eagle, California wolverine, Sierra Nevada red fox, American manna, pacific fisher, and pallid bat.

Botanical resources were evaluated in the EA. This evaluation included a review of all of the listed or proposed rare species with the potential to occur in the study area. Information sources included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife List for the Plumas National Forest, USDA Forest Service Region 5 Sensitive Species list (USDA 2006), Plumas NF rare plant records and vegetation maps, and California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) records, and reconnaissance field surveys. The EA determined that the project would not adversely affect any Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Region 5 Sensitive species. This determination is based on the negligible direct and indirect effects to individuals or areas of suitable habitat; lack of individuals known or expected to occur within the project area; or absence of suitable habitat within the project area for these species.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy performed a subsequent review of the CNDDDB and CA Native Plant Society database to determine whether there were additional biological resources subject to CEQA that were not evaluated in the EA, including state-listed species. This analysis found that there would be no additional biological resources that would require CEQA analysis. The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog was appended for coverage under the USFWS Programmatic ESA Consultation/Biological Opinion for the project, and Watch List/Special Interest species that could occur in the project area are limited to *Stellaria longifolia*. The current prescription for this species would be avoidance and protection from ground disturbance.

The proposed project activities would slightly increase the risk of noxious weed introduction by creating conditions that favor noxious weed establishment; however, implementation of

standard management practices and monitoring would result in a low risk of introduction and spread.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

Geology/Soils. The forestry activities would not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. Project best management practices (BMPs) and design features would assure that significant impacts to water quality and beneficial uses would not occur. The extent of detrimental soil disturbances would not be of a size or pattern that would result in significant change in production potential or soil hydrologic function. Moreover, proposed stream restoration and road drainage improvements would benefit water quality and aquatic habitat.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).

Hydrology/Water Quality. See Geology/Soils.

Noise. Forestry activities will generate temporary noise. However, given that project activities will be limited to daytime (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project will not cause significant noise effects.

Recreation and Scenic Resources. All of the alternatives would have some temporary negative effects on recreation and visual quality as a result of closures, noise, dust, and smoke. The project is nevertheless compliant with the Plumas National Forest Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Class for the area, and the goals and policies of the Pacific Rim Trail, Plumas National Forest, Big Creek section. The project would have long-term benefits to the forest and recreation area, as a result of fuels reduction and therefore a reduced risk of catastrophic wildfire.

Transportation. There will be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat will occur. The vehicles will not block traffic and no traffic delays will occur due to project activities.

Other CEQA Issues. The project will have no

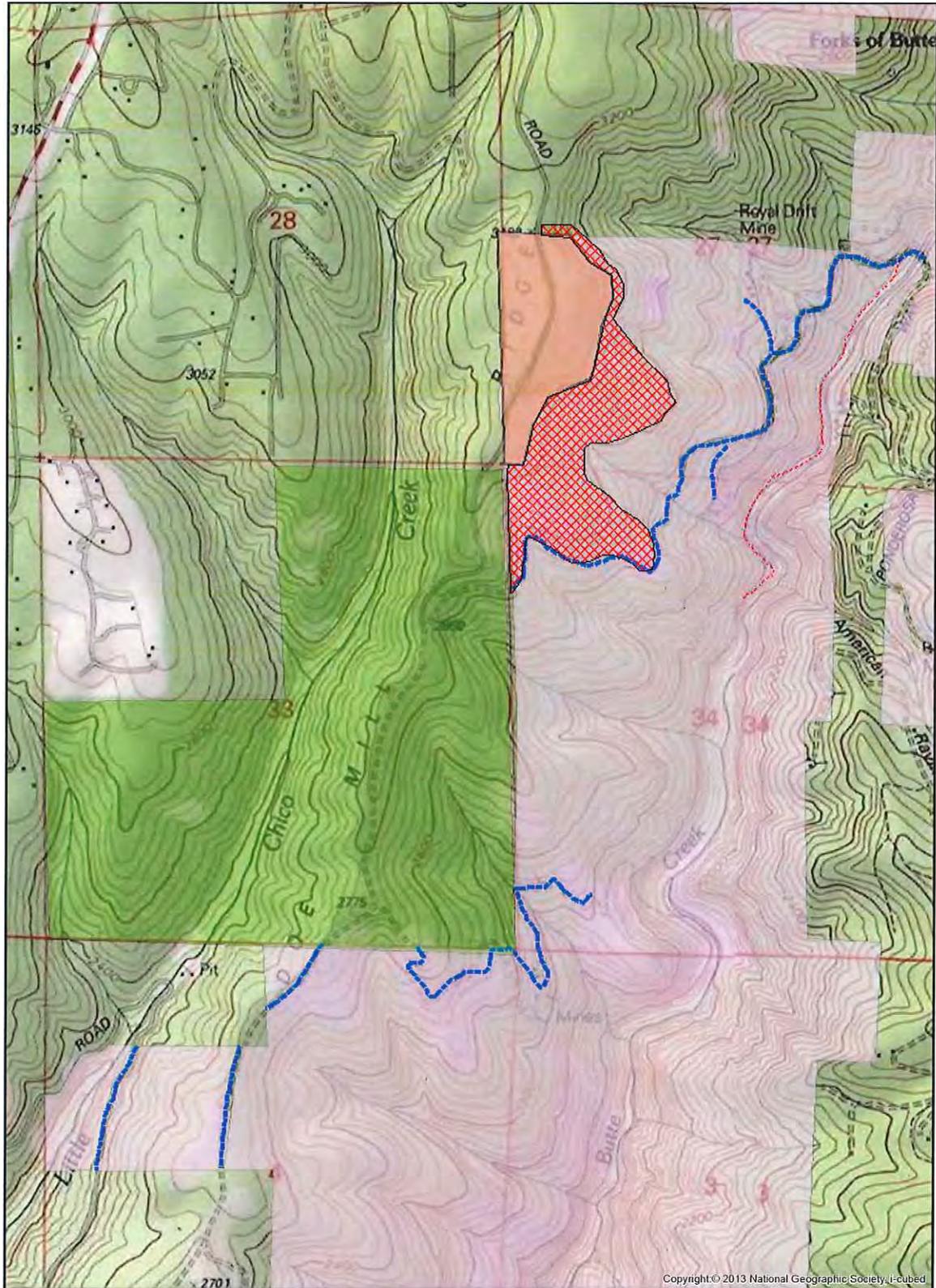
	effect on land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, or utilities and service systems.
(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.	The project area is not visible from a scenic highway, and would not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.
(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.	The project is not located on a site which is included on a hazardous waste site contained on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.	<p>No prehistoric or historic resources will be affected by the project.</p> <p>A literature review, files search, and heritage resource inventory were conducted for the Bucks Lake Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project. Based on this review, 39 heritage resource sites were found within the proposed project area. No sites were evaluated for the National Register of Historic Places and are considered potentially eligible for listing. These sites have all been flagged for avoidance. By adhering to the flag & avoid policy there would be no effects to any heritage resources in this project area.</p> <p>All cultural resources on federal land will be flagged by a US. Forest Service archeologist and avoided during project implementation. If previously undiscovered resources are encountered or suspected during project implementation, work would be halted immediately and would not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals. No work would occur in the vicinity of sensitive cultural resources. The project would not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and will not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.</p>



882
Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge
Watershed Project
Butte County
Upper Sacramento Watershed

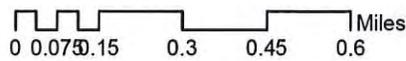


The Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project



Legend

- SPI 2015 Thinning
- Proposed Additional RxBurn Area
- Proposed RxBurn Area
- Trail Shaded Fuel Break
- Road Shaded Fuel Break
- BLM 2014a2 Holdings



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant: Sacramento River Watershed Group

Project Title: Butte Forest Thin- Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Subregion: North Central

County: Butte

SNC Funding: \$494,697.00

Total Project Cost: \$685,547.00

Application Number: 882

Final Score: 86.75

PROJECT SCOPE

The sites are situated on Doe Mill Ridge between the Butte and Little Chico Creek watersheds, adjacent to the communities of Forest Ranch, Magalia, and Paradise in Butte County. Butte Creek (a significant perennial stream that supports spring runs of the threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead) transitions below into a complex system of water supply diversions that provides surface supply for downstream municipal and agriculture users. The slopes of the project area contain several springs and seeps which feed into Little Chico and Butte Creeks. This water contributes to the baseline flows and lower water temperature in the creeks and is critical to the long term survival of aquatic species.

The project will implement hand forest thinning to reduce fire ignition risk in heavily visited areas, followed with low intensity prescribed fire to treat a total of 227.5 acres of dense understory in mixed conifer forest. The land, administered by the Redding office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), will undergo pre- and post-project monitoring to examine how pre-fire fuel reduction treatments impact fire severity and improve forest health.

This project will reduce existing hazardous fuel loads, promote forest succession, and improve the overall quality and health of the remaining forest while providing a strong demonstration of the linkages between the landscape/management in upstream areas and impacts on downstream water availability and quality.

The project will serve as a pilot to educate resource partners and the public in the use of prescribed burns in order to garner support for a larger community watershed resiliency plan for Butte and Little Chico Creeks. Four other partner entities are contributing up to \$190,000 in in-kind activities and labor discounts.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Contracts prepared/awarded for hand thinning and piling (Scopes of Work)	Oct – Nov 2016
Hire crew(s)/partner with CCC	Nov – Dec 2016
Establish pre and post fixed monitoring plots to be visited at timed intervals (Monitoring protocols and implementation: report; photos and pre-established data points, analysis/ reports)	Oct 2016 – July 2018
Implementation - Roadside and Trails (pre and post photo documentation/site mapping/as-built mapping): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roadside and Trail thinning treatments/pile burns 2. Hand line construction for controlled burn and burn piles/roadside chipping/lop and scatter 	Nov 2016 – Feb 2018
Implementation – Prescribed Burn (pre and post photo documentation/site mapping/as-built mapping): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broadcast burn 124 acres 2. Mop up and patrol 	Nov 2016 – Feb 2018
Stakeholder/outreach meetings (quarterly)	Jan 2016 – May 2018
Six Month Progress Reports (3)	March 1, 2017 September 1, 2017 March 1, 2018
Final Report and Deliverables Due	July 1, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	July 1, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
Project Management (project oversight, monitoring, reporting & invoicing)	\$59,640.00
Site Restoration Work/Contracts (crews/CCC)	\$400,000.00
Equipment/Materials	\$5,500.00
Outreach, Public Relations	\$6,000.00
Administrative**	\$23,557.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$494,697.00

* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Bureau of Land Management, Redding Field Office
 - California State University, Chico
 - Forest Ranch Fire Safe Council
 - Firestorm Wildland Fire Suppression, Inc.
 - CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire/Paradise Fire Department
 - California Indian Water Commission
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Butte County Board of Supervisors (2 letters)
 - Sierra Pacific Industries

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include one to three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Exemption

Form D

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

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

County Clerk
County of Butte
155 Nelson Avenue
Oroville, CA 95965-3411

(Address)

Project Title: Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located in Butte County, California; centered at approximately 39°50'23"N and 121°38'40"W

Project Location - City: Two miles northwest of Magalia, CA Project Location - County: Butte

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding in the amount of \$494,697 to the Sacramento River Watershed Program for forest management and restoration activities with associated protective measures for wildlife and water quality on approximately 227.5 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, including forest thinning, follow-up low intensity prescribed burning, and pre- and post-monitoring activities. (See attached).

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Sacramento River Watershed Program

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project consists of minor alterations to the condition of land. The activities proposed by the project involve the thinning of trees and prescribed burning subject to approved plans and permits to facilitate forest succession and improve forest and watershed health. This forestry work would not result in significant adverse impacts to the environment and the project includes design features and measures to protect water quality and wildlife. As such, the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which relates to minor alterations to land.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

- 1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Date: Title:

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR:
Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 882
Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Description of Activities

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding in the amount of \$494,697 to the Sacramento River Watershed Program, a 501(c)(3) organization, to treat approximately 227.5 acres of forest to facilitate forest succession, improve forest health, and reduce fire hazard. Project activities include hand-thinning, broadcast burning, and pile burning forest treatments. The project would include thinning, piling, and construction of fire containment lines on approximately 42 acres. Broadcast burning would occur on the same 42 acres, plus an additional adjacent 82 acres that have already been thinned (total of 124 acres of broadcast burn), which were evaluated by the BLM as part of the Butte Forest Thin EA. The project would also involve thinning, lop and scatter, and pile burning of approximately 103.5 acres parallel to roads and trails, which were evaluated by the BLM as part of the Redding Field Office Developed Area Fuels Reduction EA. All project activities would be consistent with applicable plans and would include project design features intended to avoid adverse environmental impacts (see the Butte Forest Thin EA, EA number: DOI-BLM-CA-N060-2012-017; and Redding Field Office Developed Area Fuels Reduction EA, EA # DOI-BLM-CAN060-2012-055).

Thinning activities would involve removal of approximately 75% of small diameter (4"-7" dbh) and 60% of large diameter (8"-28' dbh) trees according to the following specifications:

- Healthy, vigorous dominant or co-dominant oaks and conifers would be the priority leave trees. Favorable leave species would be incense cedar, sugar pine, ponderosa pine, and black oak.
- Primary cut trees would be diseased, suppressed, and trees with low crown ratio or poor form. Primary cut species would be Douglas fir and tan oak.
- Uncommon species would be left
- Cut trees would be whole-tree yarded using tractor logging on slopes <40%
- Non-commercial material would be chipped and removed as biomass or piled and prescribe burned.
- Roads would be watered for dust suppression and graded for maintenance.

Broadcast and pile burning would be conducted in accordance with a smoke management plan and burn permit that would be obtained by the Bureau of Land Management from the Butte County Air Quality Management District.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The minor land alterations proposed by the project involve the thinning and removal of trees to facilitate forest succession and improve forest and watershed health; the activities would result in reduced fire risk on approximately 227.5 acres, and the site forestry work will not result in significant adverse impacts.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief rationale as to why each exception does not apply to the Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	The goals of this approximately 227.5-acre forestry project are to restore forest and watershed health, promote forest succession, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The project work consists of minor land alterations involving the thinning of commercial and non-commercial trees. The project work does not involve activities in or adjacent to streams or waterbodies, nor will project work occur on areas known to contain hazardous substances. The project activities will not occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources.
(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.	The forest management activities will not adversely affect environmental resources, and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. The project will result in beneficial effects on the region's forests, creeks, watersheds, associated lands, and nearby neighborhoods by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and protection. In addition, the project was evaluated in two separate Environmental Assessments prepared by the BLM Redding Field Office pursuant to NEPA. These analyses found that the project, in combination with other nearby forest management treatments, would not result in significant cumulative impacts.
(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.	The proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below: Aesthetics. The forest management treatments would result in a minor change in the

appearance of the forested areas near the community of Magalia due to the selective removal of trees. However, the project would maintain the project area as a conifer forest, and would have minimal long-term effects on the project area's visual character. All proposed management practices such as site preparation, thinning, and burning would be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties. In addition, one of the project objectives is to prevent catastrophic wildfire, which could otherwise occur and result in aesthetic impacts.

Agriculture/ Forestry. The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources; consequently, the project would have no impact on agricultural resources. The project would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on approximately 227.5 acres by thinning densely forested areas, thereby helping to protect these forest resources from catastrophic wildfire.

Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities would result in nominal fugitive dust, particulate, and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions would be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the project sites, and use of mechanized equipment (e.g., chainsaws). Activities that emit fugitive dust and particulate matter (i.e., smoke) would be conducted in compliance with a smoke management plan and permit from the Butte County Air Quality Management District that will be obtained by the BLM, and which will include measures to minimize emissions. Nearby sensitive receptors would not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and would not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.

Biological Resources. No sensitive biological resources would be affected by the project. Effects on biological resources were evaluated by the BLM in the Butte Forest Thin EA, and through a subsequent review of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB).

The project would have short-term impacts to Pacific fisher, migratory bird species, and bat

species with the potential to occur in the project area, but would ultimately have long-term benefits to these species. Project design features have been incorporated to protect and improve California spotted owl and Northern goshawk habitat, and these species would not be adversely affected by the project.

The EA and subsequent review of the CNDDDB identified five special status plant species that could be affected by the project: Butte County morning glory, Butte County fritillary, Jepson's onion, dissected-leaved toothwort, and Mildred's clarkia. The project includes pre-project surveys by a BLM botanist, and the establishment of buffer zones to avoid effects on these species.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

Geology/Soils. The forestry activities would not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. The work planned as part of the project would not occur in wetlands. Mechanical activities would be limited to a minimum of 50' away from seasonal drainages, and would not occur on slopes exceeding 40%. Temporary skid stream crossings would be completely rehabilitated and storm-proofed prior to the rainy season. Treatment activities would incorporate temporary erosion control measures and best management practices to minimize the potential for soil loss or erosion. Existing roads would be used to the extent possible to limit erosion and dust, and any new trails would be ripped and covered following treatments.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).

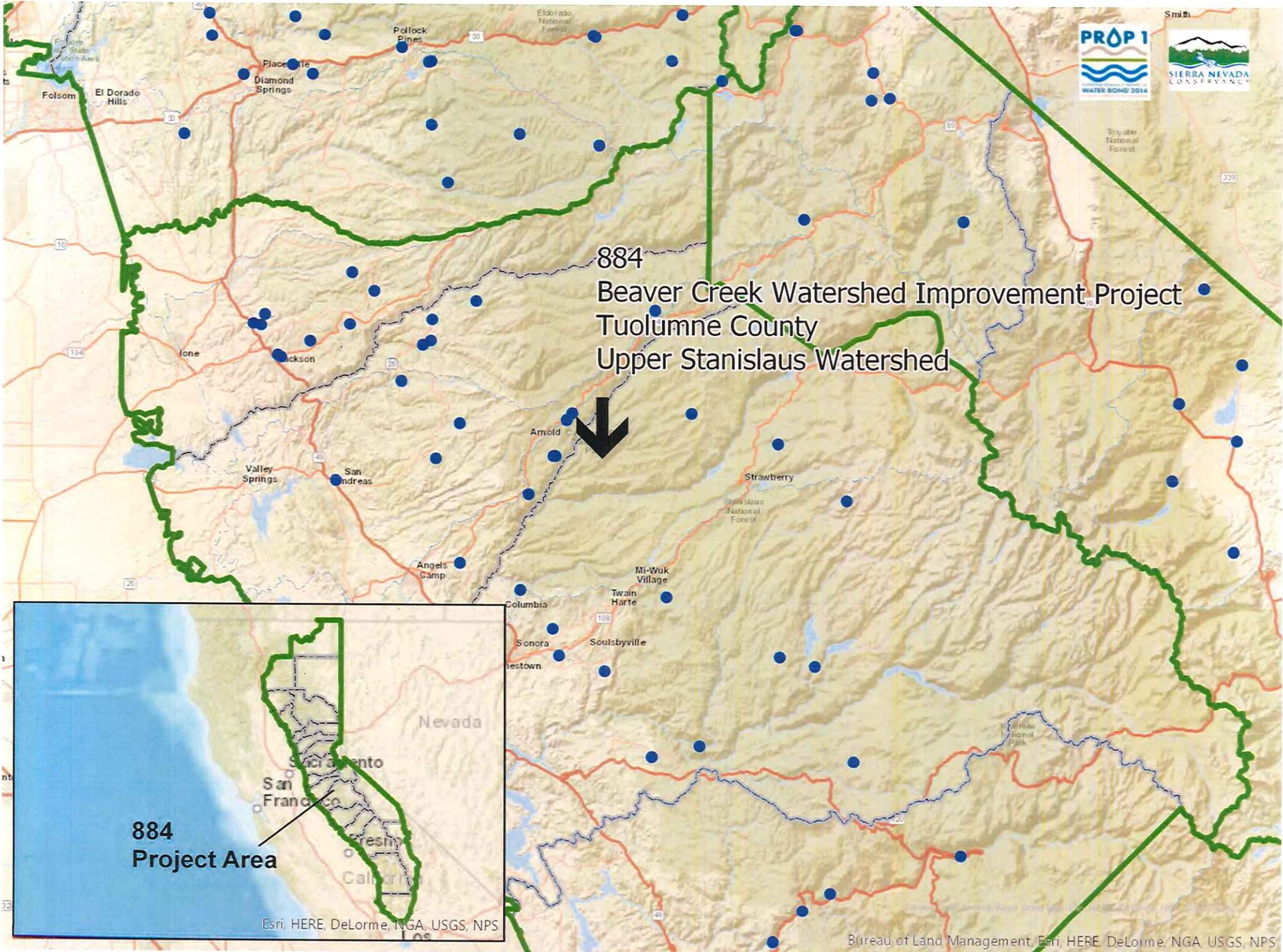
Hydrology/Water Quality. See (a) and Geology/Soils.

Mineral Resources. Not applicable.

Noise. Forestry activities would generate temporary noise. However, given that project activities would be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project would not cause significant noise effects.

	<p>Population/Housing. Not applicable.</p> <p>Public Services/Utilities. Not applicable.</p> <p>Recreation. Dispersed recreation activities would be restricted within the proposed units during timber harvests for safety. There would be no long-term effects to recreational uses in the treated areas.</p> <p>Transportation. There would be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat would occur. Existing access roads would be used insofar as is possible. New trails would be completely reclaimed post-treatment. The vehicles would not block traffic and no traffic delays would occur due to restoration activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. As identified above, the project would have no effect on land use, hazards and hazardous materials, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, or utilities and service systems.</p>
<p>(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.</p>	<p>State Route (SR) 70, approximately 8.5 miles to the southeast of the project area, is eligible for designation as a scenic highway. The project area is not visible from SR 70 and the proposed project would not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a state scenic highway.</p>
<p>(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>	<p>The project is not located on a site which is included on a hazardous waste site contained on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>
<p>(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.</p>	<p>No prehistoric or historic resources would be affected by the project. The area of the proposed project has been intensively surveyed for cultural resources. The project area was inventoried in 1975, with follow-up work by a BLM cultural resource specialist in 2012.</p> <p>Prior to project implementation a qualified BLM archeologist would flag known cultural resources. No work would occur in the vicinity of cultural resources, and project activities would be overseen by a BLM Archaeological Technician to avoid impacts to unknown or undiscovered cultural resources. If previously</p>

	undiscovered resources are encountered or suspected during project implementation, work would be halted immediately and would not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals.
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884
Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project
Tuolumne County
Upper Stanislaus Watershed



884
Project Area

Esri, HERE, DeLorme, NGA, USGS, NPS

Bureau of Land Management, Esri, HERE, DeLorme, NGA, USGS, NPS

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)**

Applicant:	Save the Redwoods League
Project Title:	Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project
Subregion:	South Central
County:	Tuolumne
SNC Funding:	\$500,000.00
Total Project Cost:	\$680,000.00
Application Number:	884
Final Score:	86.75

PROJECT SCOPE

The Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project lies on a 320-acre parcel of forestland purchased from Sierra Pacific Industries by Save the Redwoods League. The parcel lies at approximately 4,500 feet in elevation, sits about three miles from the town of Arnold, and is bordered to the south by Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBTSP). Approximately 0.3 miles of the perennial Beaver Creek, a tributary within the Stanislaus River watershed, runs through the site. Vegetation is classified as Sierran Mixed Conifer and is primarily dominated with white fir and incense cedar, but still contains ample quantities of Douglas fir, ponderosa and sugar pine, California black oak, and other significant riparian species. The site also contains a single 226-foot tall, 6.5-foot diameter Giant Sequoia; the largest naturally grown, unprotected tree of its kind.

The parcel contains large swaths of new growth from past clear-cut logging and dense, homogenous second-growth forest that are heavy in fuels and in poor health. This project will increase forest health and watershed resiliency by hand-thinning 150 acres of understory trees. Additional work to be completed includes pruning the residual trees to remove ladder fuels and increase tree vigor. Slash will be removed through a combination of mastication, pile-burning, and lop-and-scatter techniques.

Save the Redwoods League will implement a vegetation management plan that is consistent with neighboring Calaveras Big Trees State Park, designed to restore forest conditions to a more heterogeneous and resilient structure. With this approach, these stands could be maintained in the future through the use of prescribed fire. Additionally, the overall goal is to transfer this land to CBTSP to be enjoyed by the public and

maintained for long-term carbon storage and watershed protection. Save the Redwoods League has been actively collaborating with CBTSP to make this transition as soon as possible following the completion of these forest treatments.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS & DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
6-month Progress Report	Mar & Sep 2017 Mar & Sep 2018 Mar & Sep 2019
Flag Boundaries and Final Site Prep	Oct – Dec 2016
Fuels Treatment	Oct – Nov 2016 Apr – Nov 2017 Apr – Nov 2018 Apr – June 2019
Pile Burning	Dec 2016 – Mar 2017 Dec 2017 – Mar 2018 Dec 2018 – Mar 2019 Dec 2019
Conduct Final Quality Control Measures and Site Clean-Up	June – Dec 2019
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	Jan 1, 2020

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
Site Restoration Work	\$423,150.00
Project Management and Oversight	\$68,870.00
Prop 1 Signage Requirement	\$1,500.00
Project Monitoring and Reporting	\$6,480.00
Administrative**	\$0.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$500,000.00

* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings, and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Paul Prescott, President, Calaveras Big Trees Association
 - Mike Borean, Director/Secretary, Greater Arnold Business Association
 - Jenny Hatch, Executive Director, Sierra Nevada Alliance
 - Jess C. Cooper, District Superintendent, Central Valley District, California Department of Parks and Recreation
 - Jeanne Higgins, Forest Supervisor, Stanislaus National Forest, United States Forest Service

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include one to three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Exemption

Form D

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

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

(Address)

County Clerk
County of Tuolumne
2 S. Green Street, Second Floor
Sonora, CA 95370

Project Title: Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located in Tuolumne County, California; centered at approximately 38.26139°N and 120.27222°W

Project Location – City: Arnold, CA

Project Location – County: Tuolumne

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is requested to provide funding to the Save the Redwoods League (League) for forest management and restoration activities on approximately 320 acres of forested land owned by the League.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Save the Redwoods League

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project would result in minor alterations to the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation associated with forest management and restoration activities on 320 acres, including thinning of small trees (less than 12" dbh) by hand crews to improve forest and watershed health and fire resistance and to enhance deciduous vegetation communities. The project includes resource protection measures that would avoid significant impacts on the environment.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Title: _____

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR: _____
- Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 884
Beaver Creek Watershed Project

Description of Activities

Save the Redwoods League (League) proposes to treat portions of a 320-acre property to improve watershed and forest health and reduce the risk of wildfire. The property is located in Tuolumne County, approximately 3 miles northeast of the Town of Arnold, and is bounded on three sides by the Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBTSP). The treatments proposed are intended to facilitate transfer of the property from the League to the CBTSP at some point in the future. Trees on the property consist primarily of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and cedar. The property contains a 0.31-mile section of Beaver Creek, although treatment activities would not occur in or adjacent to the creek.

Specific forest management practices would include:

- Non-industrial understory thinning of approximately 150 acres of forest, including removal of all trees smaller than 12" in diameter at breast height (DBH), with conifer removal conducted in hardwood-dominant areas;
- Pruning of approximately 200 trees per acre to improve wood quality and reduce ladder fuels;
- Slash treatment through chipping/mastication, pile and burn, or lop/scatter; and
- Creation of two fuel breaks to link to the property's open fields, buffering the South Grove of the CBTSP.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The minor land alterations proposed by the project involve the thinning and removal of trees to improve forest and watershed health; the activities would result in reduced fire risk, and the forestry work would not result in significant adverse impacts.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief rationale as to why each exception does not apply to the Beaver Creek Watershed Improvement Project.

**Table 1
Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)**

Exception	Applicability
<p>(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.</p>	<p>The goals of this approximately 320-acre forestry project are to restore forest and watershed health, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire within the subject property, and reduce risks to the adjacent CBTSP.</p> <p>The project work consists of minor land alterations involving the thinning and pruning of non-commercial trees. The project work would occur in forested areas that have not been previously developed, so would not occur on areas known to contain hazardous substances. The project activities would not occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources.</p>
<p>(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.</p>	<p>The forest management activities would not adversely affect environmental resources, and would therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. In fact, the project would result in beneficial effects to the project area forest, creeks, watersheds, associated lands, and adjacent forested areas by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and protection.</p>
<p>(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.</p>	<p>The forest restoration project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below:</p> <p>Aesthetics. The forest management treatments would result in a minor change in the appearance of the forested areas near the Town of Arnold and CBTSP due to the selective removal of trees. However, the project would maintain the project area as a conifer and deciduous forest, and would have minimal long-term effects on the project area's visual character. All proposed management practices such as site preparation, thinning, and slash treatment can be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties. In addition, one of the project objectives is to prevent catastrophic wildfire, which could otherwise occur and result in severe aesthetic impacts.</p> <p>Agriculture/ Forestry. The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources;</p>

consequently, the project would have no impact on agricultural resources. The project would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on approximately 320 acres by thinning dense conifer stands (under a non-commercial thinning exemption from Cal Fire), thereby helping to protect these forest resources from catastrophic wildfire. The project would also provide forest buffer zones to protect resources within the CBTSP.

Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities would result in nominal fugitive dust, particulate, and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions would be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the project sites, and use of mechanized equipment (e.g., chainsaws,). Activities that emit fugitive dust and particulate (i.e., smoke) may be conducted. Necessary permits from Cal Fire and the Tuolumne County Air Quality Management District will be obtained by applicant and contractor for pile burning proposed as part of the project, and such activities would be conducted in compliance with permit conditions, which will include measures to minimize emissions. Nearby sensitive receptors would not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and would not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.

Biological Resources. No sensitive biological resources would be affected by the project.

The project area was evaluated for sensitive biological resources through reconnaissance level field surveys and a review of a US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) report for the area, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), and the CDFW Spotted Owl Database.

Based on the above review, no state or federally-listed plant species were identified as known or likely to occur within the project area. However, two federally-listed wildlife species were identified as having Critical Habitat or proposed Critical Habitat within or near the project area; these are the California red-legged frog and the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog. The red-legged frog is not known to occur within the project area, but

the project area is a part of that species' historical range.

The Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog range is within the project area and individuals have been documented within two miles of the property. Resource protection measures included in the project, including avoidance of streams and riparian habitat, would be sufficient to protect Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog habitat.

California spotted owl and Northern goshawk are both present in the vicinity of the project area. Standard operating procedures would include a pre-project survey to determine the presence of nesting sites. If such sites are identified, limited operating periods would be instituted for project activities affect protected activity centers for these species. Workers would also be alerted to the potential presence of these species.

The Townsend's big-eared bat is a candidate for state listing. This species is not known to occur in the project area, however, given the sensitivity of the species to disturbance of roosting sites, any trees that could provide roosting habitat would be noted and avoided during forest management activities.

In accordance with standard operating procedures, invasive vegetative species would be managed during project activities. Activities would include the targeting of invasive species and application of herbicide, as appropriate. Overall there would be a net improvement in the condition of the forest relative to invasive species as a result of project activities.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

Geology/Soils. The forestry activities would not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils.

The work planned as part of the project would not occur in wetlands or stream courses. Best management practices would be employed to limit or prevent soil erosion. No new roads or skid trails would be created as part of the project and vehicular access would be limited to existing roadways.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).

	<p>Hydrology/Water Quality. Watercourse Lake and Protection Zones (WLPZs) would be protected according to California Forest Protection Rules.</p> <p>Mineral Resources. Not applicable.</p> <p>Noise. Forestry activities would generate temporary noise. However, given that project activities would be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project would not cause significant noise effects.</p> <p>Population/Housing. Not applicable.</p> <p>Public Services/Utilities. Not applicable.</p> <p>Recreation. No specific recreational developments or improvements are proposed as part of the forest management activities. The property is currently under private ownership and so public access is restricted. The future transfer of the project to public ownership following the implementation of forest treatment practices would facilitate greater recreational opportunities and ultimately lead to a benefit to recreation.</p> <p>Transportation. There would be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat would occur, and only pre-existing access roads would be used. Vehicles would not block traffic and no traffic delays would occur due to treatment activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. As identified above, the project would have no effect on land use, hazards and hazardous materials, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, or utilities and service systems.</p>
<p>(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.</p>	<p>State Route (SR) 4, approximately two miles to the northwest of the project area is designated as a State Scenic Highway. The project area is not visible from SR 4 and the proposed project would not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of SR 4.</p>
<p>(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical</p>	<p>The project is not located on a site which is</p>

<p>exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>	<p>included on a hazardous waste site contained on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>
<p>(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.</p>	<p>No prehistoric or historic resources would be affected by the project. A records search was carried out by the Central California Information Center for historical resources in the area of the proposed project. Based on this review, only one known cultural resource is located within the project area. This resource consists of a historic railroad grade that is now used as a forest road. Project activities would not alter the condition of the road and the resource would not be degraded by the project.</p> <p>If previously undiscovered resources are encountered or suspected during project implementation, work would be halted immediately and would not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals. The project would not result in an adverse change in the significance of any archaeological or historical resource and would not disturb or destroy any human remains or paleontological resources.</p>

Current Status – Budget

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) 2015-16 budget closed as anticipated, spending 99.7% of the total \$4,166,000 that serves as SNC's base funding. This amount is funded by the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) and includes the cost savings drill of \$310,000.

Governor Brown signed the 2016-17 budget on June 27, 2016. Our base funding, which pays for operating expenses, was allocated at its regular amount and did not include a cost savings drill, as seen the last two years.

As for the SNC's grant program, we received \$200,000 in support funds from Prop 1 and \$124,000 from Prop 84. These support funds pay for some of the salaries, benefits, and travel associated with grants work. We did not receive any local assistance funding for Prop 1 this year, as we are still spending the \$10 million received last year. Finally, we received local assistance authority for \$403,000 for Prop 84. This authority allows us to utilize funds that we anticipate will be unspent from previous grants and will be coming back to the SNC.

The current status of SNC's 2016-17 budget can be viewed on page three of this report.

Current Status – Accounting

We continue to struggle to get vendors and grantees paid in a timely manner. Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS) has informed us that they are extremely backed up and will not officially close our 2015-16 books by the State Controller's Office (SCO) deadline of August 22, 2016. Missing this deadline will cause SNC's Executive Officer to receive a punitive letter that will be posted on SCO's website. The California Natural Resources Agency is working with all seven of the conservancies who use CFS for accounting to identify a consolidated approach that will help everyone. We will provide a verbal update on the accounting situation at the meeting.

Current Status – Human Resources

SNC has rolled out a new timekeeping system called Tempo. This electronic system will increase efficiency and accuracy for HR staff and all employees. SNC was using paper timesheets which were cumbersome to maintain and gather critical information from. The new Tempo system will also ensure accurate reporting of hours to invoice against the National Disaster Resilience Grant.

We have advertised the vacant position in the Outreach and Communications Unit and will provide a verbal update at the meeting.

The current SNC organizational chart can be viewed on page four of this report.

Current Status – Facilities

On July 1, 2016, SNC finalized the lease agreement with Plumas County to rent office space for Kristy Hoffman in Quincy. We appreciate the county's willingness to accommodate our needs.

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.

2016-17 SNC BUDGET
as of July 2016

Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) Budget	
<i>Personal Services</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>
SALARIES AND WAGES	2,104,738
STAFF BENEFITS	1,013,406
<i>Personal Services, Totals</i>	<i>\$3,118,144</i>
<i>Operating Expenses & Equipment</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>
GENERAL EXPENSE	46,143
PRINTING (outside printing, copier maintenance)	16,394
COMMUNICATIONS (phones, delivery services)	33,600
POSTAGE	3,712
VEHICLE INSURANCE	4,424
TRAVEL	91,000
TRAINING	18,471
FACILITIES	289,720
UTILITIES	23,300
CONTRACTS- INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT	312,815
CONTRACTS- EXTERNAL	278,464
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	39,998
PRO RATA (control agency costs)	270,615
VEHICLE OPERATIONS	23,200
<i>Total Operating Expenses & Equipment</i>	<i>\$1,451,856</i>
<i>Total ELPF Budget</i>	<i>\$4,570,000</i>

Prop 1 Budget	
<i>Personal Services</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>
SALARIES AND WAGES	135,804
STAFF BENEFITS	64,196
<i>Total Prop 1 Support Budget</i>	<i>\$200,000</i>

Prop 84 Budget	
<i>Personal Services</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>
SALARIES AND WAGES	84,108
STAFF BENEFITS	39,892
<i>Total Prop 84 Support Budget</i>	<i>\$124,000</i>
<i>Local Assistance</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>
PROP 84 LOCAL ASSISTANCE	403,000
<i>Total Prop 84 Budget</i>	<i>\$527,000</i>



Jim Branham
Executive Officer



Tristyn Armstrong
Administrative Assistant



August 2016



Amy Lussier
Division Chief
Administrative Services



Angela Avery
Division Chief
Policy and Outreach



Bob Kingman
Assistant Executive Officer



Mandy Vance
Watershed Improvement
Program Coordinator
Located in Mariposa

Field Operations and Special Projects Division



Lynda Young
Personnel & Business
Services Officer



Brittany Covich
Communication &
Outreach Manager



Andy Fristensky
Mt. Lassen Area Manager



Randi Jorgensen
Mt. Whitney Area Manager
Located in Mariposa

No
Picture
Available

Lisa Primeaux
Budget Analyst



Theresa Burgess
GSRC Coordinator



Nic Enstice
Regional Science
Coordinator



Chris Dallas
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR: El Dorado, Nevada,
Placer, Yuba



Michael Pickard
Mt. Whitney Analyst
AR: Amador, Calaveras,
Mariposa, Tuolumne
Located in Mariposa



Patrick Eidman
Grant Program Coordinator



Dave Madrigal
System Administrator



Ali Sambucetti
Communication &
Outreach Technician

No
Picture
Available

Liz vanWagtendonk
GIS Analyst
Located in Mariposa



Lynn Campbell
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR: Butte, Plumas, Sierra,
Tehama



Autumn Hutchings
Mt. Whitney Technician
Located in Mariposa



Lisa Forma
Grants Analyst



Matthew Daley
IT Analyst



Belinda Gutierrez
Communication Support
Analyst



Elizabeth Betancourt
Policy Analyst



Kristy Hoffman
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR: Lassen, Modoc, Shasta
Located in Quincy



Sarah Campe
Mt. Whitney Analyst
AR: Fresno, Kern, Madera,
Tulare
Located in Three Rivers



Julie Griffith-Flatter
Abandoned Mine Lands
and Tribal Coordinator



Barbara Harriman
Bond Fund Analyst



Donna Martinez
Contracts & Procurement
Analyst



Marji Feliz
Policy & Outreach Analyst



Danna Stroud
Mt. Whitney Analyst
AR: Alpine, Inyo, Mono
Located in Bishop



Elissa Brown
Fund Development
Coordinator
Located in Mariposa



Jennifer Barnes
Personnel Specialist



Denice Maberry
Administrative Technician
Auburn Receptionist

AR = Area Representative

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff continues tracking and engaging in a variety of legislative/policy, outreach/ communications, and scientific research activities with an end goal of educating California decision makers about the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the state. As wildfire season heats up, staff continues to look for new, innovative ways to share broader Regional messages about current Sierra conditions; the long-term impacts that large, damaging wildfires have on the state's air, water, wildlife, climate, and economy; and the dire need for California to increase the amount of funding available to protect these valuable resources.

Current Status

Legislation

The two-year legislative session ended on August 31, 2016. Staff has been tracking numerous bills, which at the time of this writing were still making their way through the legislative process. Of particular interest to the Sierra Nevada Region and the SNC are the following:

Park Bond:

- AB 2444 (Garcia) would expend \$3.12 billion for natural resources and parks throughout California. Should the current version of the bill (as of this writing) and a subsequent bond pass, the SNC would receive \$52.5 million - \$22.5 million from a pot of money identified for Conservancies and \$30 million from a pot of money identified for forest health and fuels reduction work. It is likely that there will be additional changes to the bill and its fate remains uncertain. The Governor's office continues to express serious concerns over the potential of additional state indebtedness via public bonds. Based on the most recent information, should the bill make it through the legislature, it is likely to be on the 2018 ballot rather than this year's.

Source Watersheds:

- AB 2480 (Bloom) would identify the importance of maintaining the reliability of California's water supply by financing the maintenance and repair of watersheds on the same basis as other water collection and treatment infrastructure as well as, to the extent feasible, ensure that the maintenance and repair activities eligible are limited to certain forest ecosystem management activities. Unfortunately, the bill in its current form includes only the source watersheds that supply the major watersheds supplying the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. A number of SNC partners have been advocating for the bill to be expanded to include all California source watersheds.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund:

- SB 1386 (Wolk) would protect and manage natural and working lands as a key strategy in meeting the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals. The bill would require all state agencies, departments, boards, and commissions to consider this policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations,

expenditures, or grant criteria relating to the protection and management of natural and working lands.

UC Berkeley Distinguished Visitors Program

The UC Berkeley Distinguished Visitors Program (DVP) provides support to bring a diverse portfolio of distinguished statesmen, scientists, and other leaders to the Berkeley community. This year, program directors have opted to include the SNC in the planning process, incorporating more “real world” issues in the program, aimed at identifying, and possibly implementing, innovative policy responses to some of the major issues being dealt with in the Region.

The DVP will pay for visits with leaders who have exemplified a “pivot” type effort on a high-stakes problem: from a conventional approach to a more innovative – and perhaps not initially intuitive – approach. This innovation might include approaches such as new partnerships, reapplication of otherwise conventional legal tools, implementing a challenging financing mechanism, or refocusing the problem.

Staff is working with the DVP Coordinator, Robert Ewing, to use this opportunity to further the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP).

California Headwaters Partnership

The SNC staff has continued to work with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Region 5 to provide information to the federal Resilient Lands and Waters (RLW) Initiative team. The highlight of this effort was presenting at an August meeting with Jonathan Steele, the new RLW lead from the Department of Interior (DOI). Steele, who is based in Washington, D.C., traveled to Sacramento to learn about Regional RLW efforts, so the meeting offered an overview of the CA Headwaters Partnership as well as a discussion of challenges, lessons learned, and best practices regarding our large landscape restoration efforts in the Region. The meeting also included a number of public and nonprofit agency stakeholders.

Other activities since the last Board meeting included presenting information during a June conference call with other partners and coordinating with the USFS to update materials for distribution at the recent World Conservation Congress (hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature), where Forest Service staff highlighted the CA Headwaters Partnership during an RLW panel discussion. The next action item for the CA Headwaters Partnership will be to submit a brief final report to the DOI by early October.

California Adaptation Forum

The California Adaptation Forum is scheduled in Long Beach, CA, on September 7-8. The SNC will participate in one of the panels emphasizing rural areas, and the importance of upper watersheds and forests for the adaptive capacity of the entire state. SNC’s participation is a result of our active participation in the Sierra Climate Adaptation

and Mitigation Partnership (Sierra CAMP) and its umbrella group, the Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA).

Tours and Meetings

SNC co-sponsored a tour with the California Forestry Foundation for legislators and their staff in the Truckee and Plumas County area. The focus of the tour was on the benefits of forest thinning and biomass utilization and the role forests play in storing carbon. A total of fourteen legislative staff members attended, representing both houses and both parties, as well as an urban-rural mix.

SNC hosted a couple of field tours over the summer to help educate decision makers about the importance of the Sierra Nevada Region. Those tours are described in more detail in the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Update ([Agenda Item IX](#)). During the tours, staff captured video and interviews that will be utilized to develop future outreach and communications products focused on forest health and carbon storage, wildfire risk, and the importance of incorporating Sierra forests in the state's long-term climate policies.

Outreach and Communications

Following the USFS's aerial tree mortality survey in late May, the Communications Team produced a new tree mortality fact sheet (see [Attachment A](#)) for the Sierra, as well as a short [voice-over video](#), and a tree mortality web presence on the SNC website. The fact sheet highlights tree mortality numbers specific to the Sierra Nevada Region, provides information about the larger greenhouse gas implications of these dying forests, and promotes the need for increased restoration.

The SNC has been quoted in, or has provided background information for, several news stories on tree mortality including the July issue of the [Ag Alert](#), an online water blog called [Water Deeply](#), the [Reno News & Review](#), and the Mountain Democrat (August/September publication).

Staff has also been working with the video production crew from the Department of Water Resources to develop a short video on the effectiveness of forest thinning treatments. This video will feature fuels treatments in Calaveras County that helped to protect communities during the 2015 Butte Fire, and forest thinning work supported by SNC that has reduced tree mortality on Bureau of Land Management Lands. We anticipate releasing this video during Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week during the third week of September.

Staff also worked with the USFS communications team to release a new paper on greenhouse gas emissions from wildfires on National Forest Lands (see [Attachment B](#)). To support the release of the paper, SNC (Jim Branham) co-authored an op-ed with Regional Forester Randy Moore that was submitted to the Sacramento Bee for publication. At the time of this writing, staff is uncertain when the paper will actually be

published. A verbal update and copy of the op-ed will be provided if it is published before this meeting.

Great Sierra River Cleanup

This year's Great Sierra River Cleanup will be held on Saturday, September 17, and will kick off the week-long [Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week](#). Last year, Assembly Member Brian Dahle authored Assembly Concurrent Resolution 22 which established the third week of September as "Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week." Staff is developing communications products that will highlight the importance of Sierra watersheds and the need for the WIP, and is organizing a tour which will be co-hosted by Placer County Water Agency. The tour will bring high-level state agency administrators, legislators, and legislative staff into the forest near Placer County to learn about restoring forests to protect water supply.

Social Media

The SNC staff has been primarily utilizing social media to carry messages focused on current Sierra forest conditions and the long-term impacts large, damaging wildfires in those forests can have on state resources, focusing on telling these stories visually through videos, graphics, and photos. Social media continues to be an effective method for sharing these messages in these ways. The Forest Carbon Story Map that staff shared at the June Board meeting has received over 2,000 views, and our SNC Facebook page has reached over 1,000 page likes.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to identify and track legislation of importance to the SNC as well as to implement outreach and communications activities in support of SNC programs and activities.

Recommendation

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

Agenda Item VIIb
Policy and Outreach Update
Attachment A

SIERRA NEVADA TREE MORTALITY

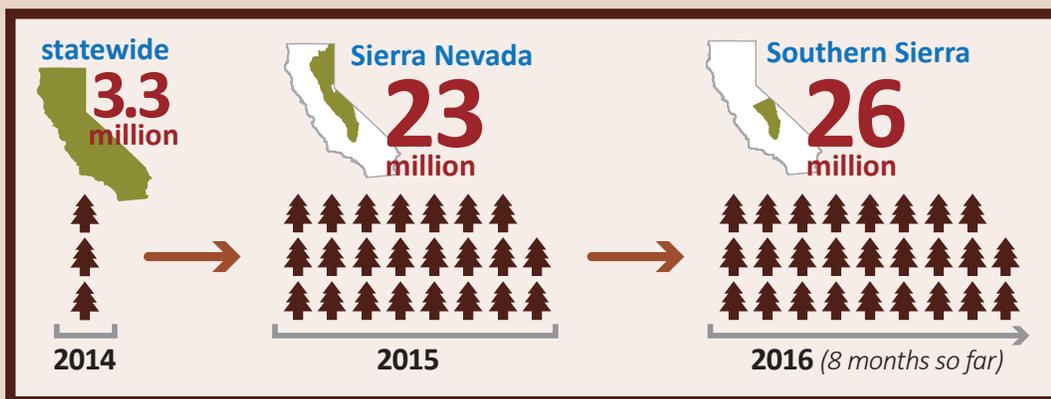


April 2015



March 2016

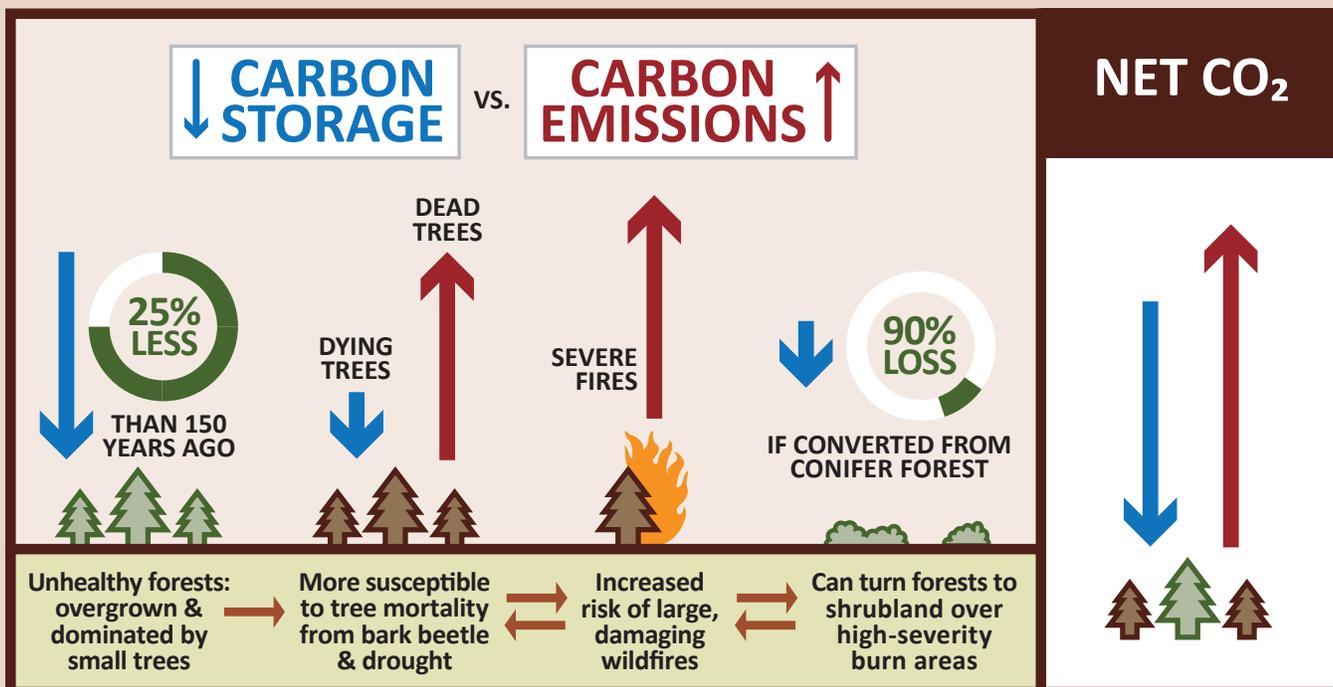
Location in Madera County before and after tree mortality began spreading. Photos: Margarita Gordus, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife



Number of dead trees caused by bark beetles and drought based on year and location

A century of fire suppression, years of drought, and a warming climate have made Sierra Nevada forests **more vulnerable** to tree mortality from bark beetles and large, damaging wildfire.

CURRENT STATE OF SIERRA FORESTS: CARBON ABSORPTION



Reduced carbon storage plus more carbon emissions means many forests are **contributing to climate change** rather than offsetting it.

WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

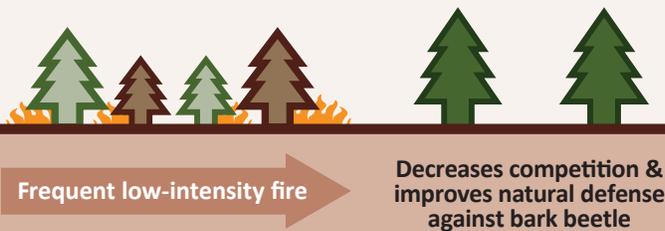


Sierra forests are unhealthy and vulnerable. The Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (**WIP**) is a broad effort organized by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and U.S. Forest

Service to significantly increase restoration in the Sierra Nevada and promote healthy forests and watersheds that are resilient to drought, insects, wildfire, and climate change.

FOREST RESTORATION, A LONG-TERM CLIMATE SOLUTION

PRESCRIBED BURNING & THINNING REDUCES TREE MORTALITY



TREATMENTS

Prescribed burning Managed wildland fire Mechanical thinning

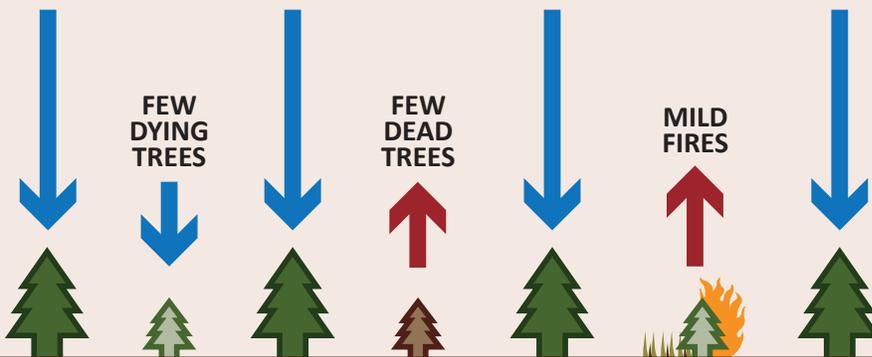
ACTIONS NEEDED

- ↑ **Funding** for restoration and infrastructure
- ↑ **Biomass utilization** infrastructure in order to process forest waste, a restoration byproduct
- Incorporate restoration into **climate policy**

↓ **CARBON STORAGE**

vs.

CARBON EMISSIONS ↑

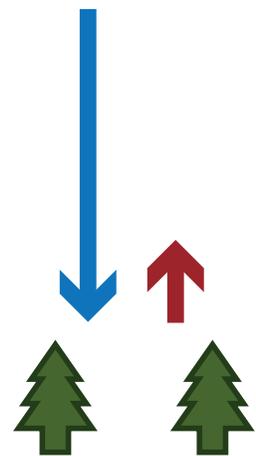


Healthy forests:
more sparse,
larger trees

Resilient against tree
mortality from bark beetle,
drought, climate change

Low risk of
large, damaging
wildfires

NET CO₂



Forest restoration shifts stored carbon from many small trees to fewer larger, older trees, resulting in more stored carbon overall. These forests are more resilient to drought, wildfire, and insects, which further stabilizes carbon storage. This means treated forests will do what they have historically done: absorb carbon and help **offset climate change**.

Agenda Item VIIb
Policy and Outreach Update
Attachment B

Direct greenhouse gas emissions from megafires are only one piece of the forest carbon emission story

Leland Tarnay (USFS) and Christopher Potter (NASA-Ames)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: GHG emissions caused by wildfire do not necessarily end when the fire is put out, especially when megafires burn at uncharacteristically high severity and kill the trees that comprise the canopy. This brief summarizes what we know about the relative importance of direct fire emissions, post-fire mortality-driven emissions, and drought-related emissions for the last three years on federal lands.

GHG EMISSIONS DIRECT FROM FIRE COMBUSTION:

In 2013, the Rim fire, fueled by accumulated, dry biomass, burned over 250,000 acres and emitted 10-15 MMTCO₂e (million metric tons of CO₂ equivalents), ushering in a 3-year period of unprecedented fire activity in California, corresponding with unprecedented drought. Here is what we know about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and National Park Service (NPS) forests in CA during that timeframe:

- Methods for estimating wildfire emissions are an area of active research, but our best estimates of total emissions in 2013-2015 for **GHGs from CA wildfires on federal lands alone have consistently amounted to around 20-25 Million Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (MMTCO₂e) each year.**
- **Each year, one or two large megafires generated somewhere around half the total wildfire emissions from federal lands in CA,** and 4 large fires accounted for around half of the total emissions over that 3 year period (Figure 1).

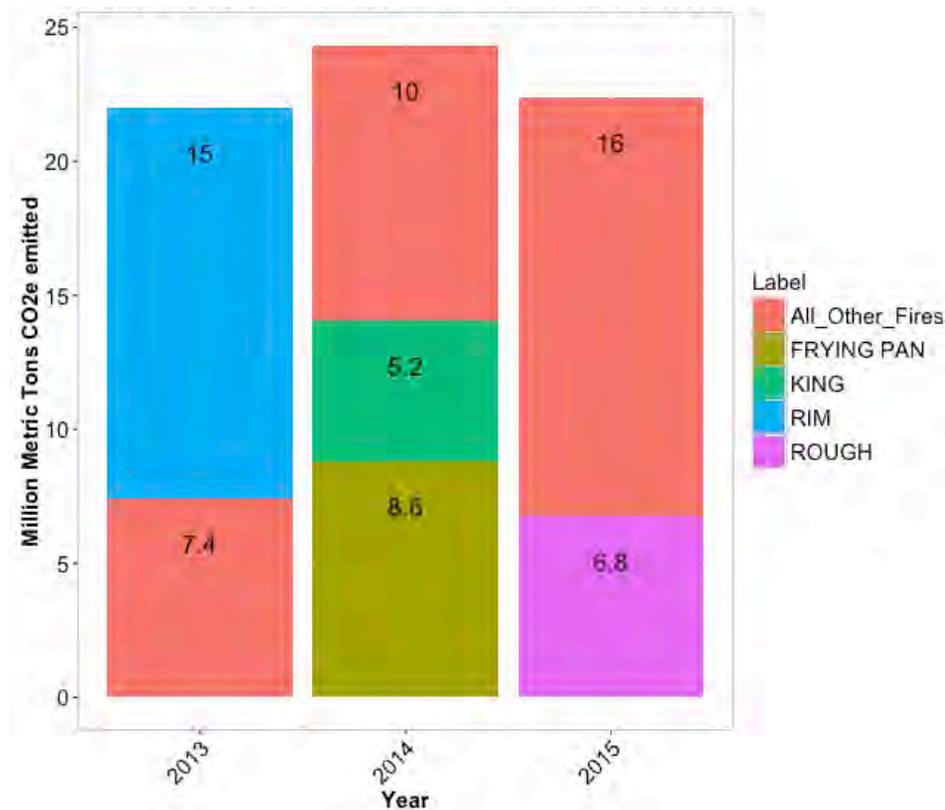


Figure 1. Active wildfire greenhouse gas emissions¹ from National Park Service and National Forest lands in CA, 2013-2015. Emissions from the 2015 Valley and Butte fire (CA State lands) were not available at the time of analysis.

Figure 1).

POST-FIRE AND MORTALITY-INDUCED GHG EMISSIONS:

Models based on satellite data show that in many places the amount of carbon soaked up by green, photosynthesizing (healthy) plants exceeds the amount of carbon released as CO₂ by plant and microbial respiration (net absorption of GHGs, as new biomass, to the landscape from the atmosphere), at least in years with normal precipitation. This balance between respiration and photosynthesis is called Net Ecosystem Productivity, or NEP. In drought years and in places where forests are unhealthy and tree death (mortality) is high, this balance can change to a negative value, meaning that the landscape is losing carbon to the atmosphere in the form of CO₂ and other GHGs (net GHG emissions).

- Figure 2 shows evidence that the post-fire mortality from the 2013 Rim fire and the 2014 King and Frying Pan fires has caused hotspots of negative NEP values in subsequent years, **indicating substantial post-fire losses of GHGs to the atmosphere due to these fires.**
- Figure 2 also shows widespread, but less intense losses, likely due to drought and insect mortality.
- Neither the precise size of these annual emissions, nor how much is due to drought versus fire mortality in these post-fire hotspots is yet precisely known, but recent research suggests that **the magnitude of these post-fire emissions in subsequent years could rival or even exceed the direct emissions of the initial wildfire event** (Matchett, J.M. et al. 2015, Battles, J. et al. 2015).
- **Over decades, this progressive loss due to drought and wildfire-caused mortality could tip the scales so that some forests may release more carbon (as GHGs) than they absorb** (Gonzalez et al., 2015).
- Other recent research has found that **low and moderate severity fires (e.g., prescribed fire) reduce mortality due to fire and drought** (van Mantgem, P., et al. 2016; Hurteau, M. D., et al. 2015; Hood, S. M., et al. 2015), which may help minimize the subsequent GHG emissions.

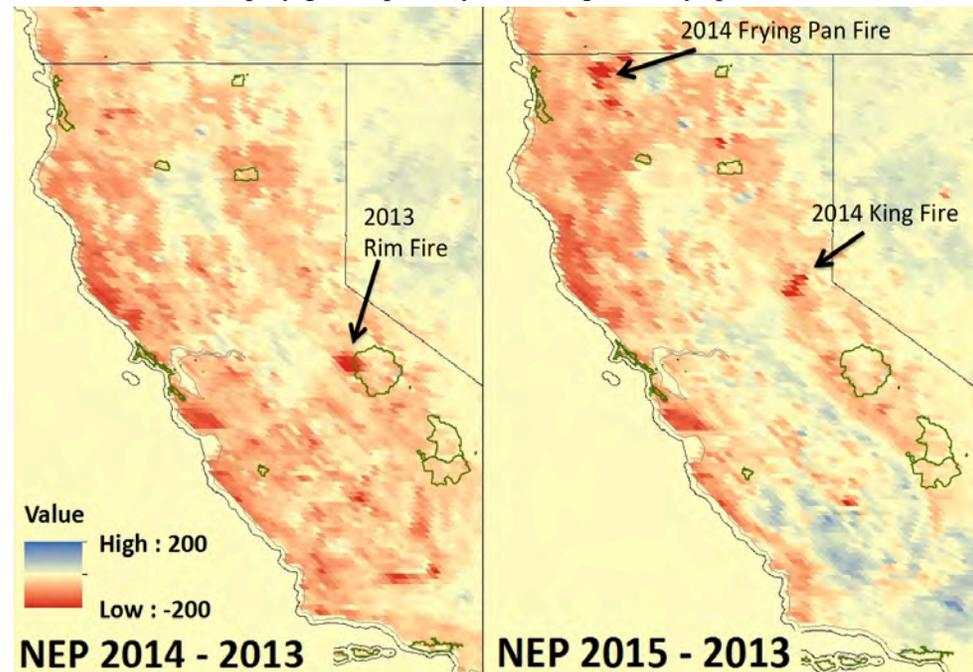


Figure 2. Satellite-derived Net Ecosystem Productivity (NEP)², showing intense areas of progressive net carbon gain (blue) or loss (red, grams of carbon per square meter) from burned areas after 2013 and 2014 fires. Specifically, the above figures depict the differences between 2013 NEP and 2014 NEP (left panel) and the difference between 2013 and 2015 NEP (right panel). Larger areas of progressive net loss compared to this 2013 baseline year, likely due to drought and insect mortality, are also apparent throughout the CA forests (green outlines are National Park borders for orientation).

¹Wildfire emissions estimated using FOFEM 6.1, with a geospatial preprocessor developed for the California Air Resources Board.

²Net Ecosystem Productivity (NEP) is the amount of carbon gained on a landscape from plant growth minus the amount lost from plant and microbial respiration: a negative value indicates carbon lost to the atmosphere as GHGs. Estimates are based on: Potter, C., S. Klooster, A. Huete, and V. Genovese, 2007, Terrestrial carbon sinks for the United States predicted from MODIS satellite data and ecosystem modeling, Earth Interactions, 11: 1-2

Background

In January, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded California and Tuolumne County a disaster relief grant in the amount of \$70,359,459 as part of a National Disaster Resilience Competition. The purpose of the grant is to help Tuolumne County recover from the Rim Fire of 2013. The grant provides assistance in three areas: (1) forest and watershed health (\$28.6M), (2) development of a biomass utilization facility (\$22M), and (3) development of a community resilience center (\$19.8M).

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is acting as the project manager with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the forest and watershed and biomass utilization areas of activity included in the grant award. The SNC Board has previously authorized staff to enter into agreements and hire the staff necessary to support those activities.

Current Status

At the time of this writing, HUD and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) still have not finalized or signed grant agreements, though HUD has approved a waiver request that extends the project implementation period from two to five years from the date of the final grant agreement. Once HUD and HCD have their agreement in place, SNC will be in a position to complete an interagency agreement with HCD and from there to work with CAL FIRE and the United States Forest Service to finalize the additional agreements that will be necessary for them to get work completed on the ground.

As we wait for grant agreements to be signed, SNC staff continues to work with project partners to develop metrics and the project plans necessary to implement the grant. Additionally, staff has taken steps to draft and release duty statements so that we are ready to make hiring offers to necessary personnel immediately upon signing an SNC-HCD interagency agreement.

Next Steps

Until the grant agreements are in place, SNC staff will continue to focus on the highest priority activities – minimal stakeholder communication and hiring the necessary personnel to properly implement the grant. Once grant agreements and new personnel are in place, staff will begin work to develop a detailed public outreach plan as well as the required Action Plan that will guide project roll out into the future.

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.

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) held the first of the Tribal Forum (Forum) series the day before the June Board meeting in Susanville. These forums, scheduled the day before each of the rotating Subregional Board meetings, are designed to initiate discussions with tribes about the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) and the Region's current and future conditions. Two tribes and SNC Boardmembers Terrence O'Brien and Pam Giacomini, along with SNC staff, attended the first Forum. As intended, the Forum provided the opportunity for introductions and a springboard for future dialog. Topics of discussion included the WIP, tribal participation in SNC programs and governance, and the tribes' priorities in resource management and other concerns. Although tribal representation at the first meeting was not high, there was a significant level of exchange which has led to some follow-up action items:

- Exploration of tribal representation on the SNC Board
- Tribal review of the WIP watershed assessments in the Northern Subregion
- Exploration of grant application development under the SNC Proposition 1 grant program

Current Status

At this writing, the second of the series of Tribal Forums is scheduled to take place Wednesday, September 7, prior to the Board tour. (Information from the Tribal Forum will be provided to the Board during the meeting.)

Next Steps

SNC staff will continue to incorporate lessons learned from our conversations with tribal participants and begin planning the next Tribal Forum which will be held in December in Placer County. As appropriate, information gathered at these forums will be integrated into the assessment and implementation of the WIP in an ongoing manner.

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.

Background

On October 29, 2015, Governor Brown issued an Emergency Proclamation ([Attachment A](#)) in response to the dramatic and extensive die-off of trees in the state. With this proclamation, the Governor established the Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF).

The Governor's Task Force meets the second Monday of every month and includes various agencies and organizations that coordinate activities to successfully achieve task force goals. Working Groups meet regularly to analyze and address issues. These Working Groups are broken out into focus areas in order to provide information and recommendations on various needs. These groups include:

- Healthy Forest & Resiliency
 - Prescribed Fire group merged with the Healthy Forest Working Group
- Mapping & Monitoring
- Resource Allocation
 - Subgroup developed to address possible assistance for private landowners
- Public Outreach
- Regulations
- Utilization Bioenergy
- Utilization Market Development

SNC staff participates on five of the Working Groups.

Information on current activities of the Task Force can be found on the Tree Mortality Website, maintained by CAL FIRE at <http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/>.

Current Status

To date, The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has expended \$568,444 out of the \$1,000,000 apportioned by the Board in March 2016 for Tree Mortality projects. \$431,556 remains for upcoming grant applications for sites impacted by tree mortality.

The Forest Service recently conducted aerial surveys of the state. This has resulted in new tree mortality numbers. An additional 28,551,517 trees have died of drought and bark beetle since October 2015. This brings the statewide mortality level to over 68,000,000 since 2010.

Multiple entities are making strides to address the tree mortality issue. CAL FIRE intends to allocate additional resources to assist all ten counties later in this summer and into the fall. The USDA Forest Service is looking at using Special Use Permits to provide for a Categorical Exclusion for a year of tree removal. Trees may be felled and moved, but not sold. The Market Development Working Group continues discussions with Department of Water Resources to identify high volume use of wood chips for dust control at the Salton Sea.

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) continues to pursue disaster funding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) participated in a flyover of High Hazard areas. Information and data collected by OES for the funding request is scheduled to be provided to FEMA before Labor Day.

All ten of the Priority counties have developed their own county task forces to address tree mortality. CAL FIRE sent guidance out in an effort to engage local fire entities regarding logistics and other fire safety concerns occurring at the local level. The guidance will be especially important to out-of-state crews fighting fire in the current conditions.

Trees on private land continue to be a huge concern of affected counties. There are limited resources available for those individuals who want to remove hazard trees adjacent to their homes. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has applied for \$10 million which would be made available to owners of non-industrial forestlands (10 acres and more) for removal of dead trees. It is a forest health grant, not a disaster mitigation grant and cannot be used within 200 feet of structures. It is administered through the NRCS EQIP program.

PG&E recently announced an expanded tree management program to help customers who have dead or dying trees threatening power infrastructure. The newly expanded program is available to PG&E customers in 10 counties. If drought/bark beetle infested trees have the potential to come into contact with PG&E electrical facilities, the company is willing to take the trees down and remove the debris from the property. It is noted that the utility will only haul away debris that it takes down. The debris must be reasonably accessible by equipment/machinery. It must also be within 100 feet of permanent structures or within 20 feet of serviceable roadways. There is no cost for customers.

Next Steps

While the Task Force's attention continues to be on those counties most severely affected by tree mortality, there is a growing understanding of the need to increase efforts to increase resiliency in forests not yet impacted to the same degree. Forest experts anticipate that mortality will continue to move northward, although the pace and magnitude is not easily predicted.

Scientific and government documents stress that future forest management must take into account the impacts of climate change, the duration of the drought, and the wave of beetles which are affecting various trees. These infestations occur on various species of trees stressed by injury, drought, poor site conditions, root disease, overcrowding, or old age. As beetle populations increase, attacks may involve most trees six inches in diameter or greater in the outbreak area, regardless of their apparent health.

Restoration efforts must take into account which species may have the highest likelihood of survival in areas where conditions are changing. There is a possibility of vegetative type conversion in many areas. Only combined efforts and collaborative approaches can make a difference in the survival of the Sierra Nevada forests.

It is likely that the forest of the future in the Sierra Nevada will be quite different than those of the past, making thoughtful, collaborative approaches essential in addressing the challenges we face. The SNC will continue to address this issue in a number of ways, including communications efforts. Staff recently developed a tree mortality fact sheet, focusing on the carbon storage and greenhouse gas emissions aspects of the situation.

Recommendation

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

Agenda Item VIIe
Tree Mortality Task Force
Update
Attachment A

Executive Department
State of California

PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS the State of California is experiencing record drought conditions, which have persisted for the last four years; and

WHEREAS on January 17, 2014, I proclaimed a State of Emergency to exist throughout the State of California due to severe drought conditions; and

WHEREAS a lack of precipitation over the last four years has made trees in many regions of California susceptible to epidemic infestations of native bark beetles, which are constrained under normal circumstances by the defense mechanisms of healthy trees; and

WHEREAS these drought conditions and resulting bark beetle infestations across broad areas have caused vast tree mortality in several regions of the state, with the United States Forest Service estimating that over 22 million trees are dead and that tens of millions more are likely to die by the end of this year; and

WHEREAS recent scientific measurements suggest that the scale of this tree die-off is unprecedented in modern history; and

WHEREAS this die-off is of such scale that it worsens wildfire risk across large regions of the State, presents life safety risks from falling trees to Californians living in impacted rural, forested communities, and worsens the threat of erosion across watersheds; and

WHEREAS such wildfires will release thousands of tons of greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollutants; and

WHEREAS the circumstances of the tree die-off, by reason of its magnitude, is or is likely to be beyond the control of the services, personnel, equipment and facilities of any single county, city and county, or city and require the combined forces of a mutual aid region or regions to combat; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of section 8558(b) of the California Government Code, I find that conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist within the State of California due to these events; and

WHEREAS under the provisions of section 8571 of the California Government Code, I find that strict compliance with various statutes and regulations specified in this order would prevent, hinder, or delay the mitigation of the effects of the drought.



NOW, THEREFORE, I, EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor of the State of California, in accordance with the authority vested in me by the State Constitution and statutes, including the California Emergency Services Act, and in particular, section 8625 of the California Government Code, **HEREBY PROCLAIM A STATE OF EMERGENCY** to exist within the State of California.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Department of Transportation, and the California Energy Commission shall immediately identify areas of the State that represent high hazard zones for wildfire and falling trees using best available science and geospatial data.
2. State agencies, utilities, and local governments to the extent required by their existing responsibilities to protect the public health and safety, shall undertake efforts to remove dead or dying trees in these high hazard zones that threaten power lines, roads and other evacuation corridors, critical community infrastructure, and other existing structures. Incidental vegetation such as shrubs that restrict access for safe and efficient removal of the dead and dying trees also may be removed. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall issue emergency guidelines setting forth the relevant criteria, and the California Conservation Corps shall assist government entities in implementing this directive to the extent feasible.
3. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall identify potential storage locations for removed trees across impacted areas in partnership with federal agencies and local jurisdictions.
4. The California Department of Transportation shall formally request immediate assistance through the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program, Title 23, United States Code section 125, in order to obtain federal assistance for removal of dead and dying trees that are adjacent to highways.
5. The Department of General Services will identify state facilities, and the California Department of Transportation shall identify highway and road corridors, where woodchips produced from dead trees can be used as mulch.
6. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall work with impacted counties to distribute portable equipment across high hazard zones so that isolated communities can remove and process wood waste locally where appropriate.
7. The California Air Resources Board and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection shall work together and with federal land managers and the United States Environmental Protection Agency to expand the practice of prescribed burns, which reduce fire risk and avoid significant pollution from major wildfires, and increase the number of allowable days on a temporary basis to burn tree waste that has been removed in high hazard areas.

8. The California Public Utilities Commission shall utilize its authority to extend contracts on existing forest bioenergy facilities receiving feedstock from high hazard zones.
9. The California Public Utilities Commission shall take expedited action to ensure that contracts for new forest bioenergy facilities that receive feedstock from high hazard zones can be executed within six months, including initiation of a targeted renewable auction mechanism and consideration of adjustments to the BioMat Program defined pursuant to Public Utilities Code section 399.20. No later than six months after the BioMat program begins, the California Public Utilities Commission shall evaluate the need for revisions to the program to facilitate contracts for forest bioenergy facilities.
10. The California Public Utilities Commission shall prioritize facilitation of interconnection agreements for forest bioenergy facilities in high hazard zones, and shall order the use of expedited mediation or other alternative dispute resolution processes when conflicts delay development of projects.
11. The California Energy Commission shall prioritize grant funding from the Electric Program Investment Charge for woody biomass-to-energy technology development and deployment, consistent with direction from the California Public Utilities Commission.
12. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the California Energy Commission, and other appropriate agencies shall work with land managers to estimate biomass feedstock availability, storage locations, and volumes that may be available for use as bioenergy feedstock at existing and new facilities.
13. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Energy Commission shall work with bioenergy facilities that accept forest biomass from high hazards zones to identify potential funds to help offset higher feedstock costs.
14. The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection will work with affected counties and existing wood product markets to determine the feasibility for expanded wood product markets in California.
15. For purposes of carrying out directives 1, 2, and 5 through 8, Division 13 (commencing with section 21000) of the Public Resources Code and regulations adopted pursuant to that Division are hereby suspended. This suspension applies to any actions taken by state agencies, and for actions taken by local agencies where the state agency with primary responsibility for implementing the directive concurs that local action is required, as well as for any necessary permits or approvals required to complete these actions.

16. In order to ensure that equipment and services necessary for emergency response can be procured quickly, the provisions of the Government Code and the Public Contract Code applicable to state contracts, including, but not limited to, advertising and competitive bidding requirements, are hereby suspended as necessary to carry out this Proclamation. Approval by the Department of Finance is required prior to the execution of any contract entered into pursuant to these directives.

17. For purposes of this Proclamation, Chapter 3.5 (commencing with section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of the Government Code is suspended for the development and adoption of regulations or guidelines needed to carry out the provisions in this Order. Any entity issuing regulations or guidelines pursuant to this directive shall conduct a public meeting on the regulations and guidelines prior to adopting them.

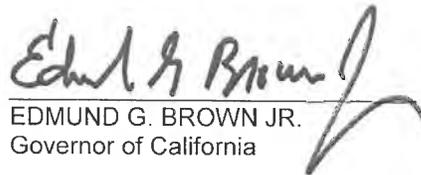
18. The Office of Emergency Services shall provide local government assistance as appropriate under the authority of the California Disaster Assistance Act, California Government Code section 8680 et seq. and California Code of Regulations, title 19, section 2900 et seq.

19. State agencies shall actively monitor tree removal efforts directed by this Proclamation to assess their effectiveness in protecting forest health and strengthening forest resilience.

This Proclamation is not intended to, and does not, create any rights or benefits, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, against the State of California, its agencies, departments, entities, officers, employees, or any other person.

I FURTHER DIRECT that as soon as hereafter possible, this proclamation be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State and that widespread publicity and notice be given of this proclamation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 30th day of October 2015.


EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor of California

ATTEST:

ALEX PADILLA
Secretary of State



Agenda Item VIIe Tree Mortality Task Force Update

Presented By: Randi Jorgensen



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

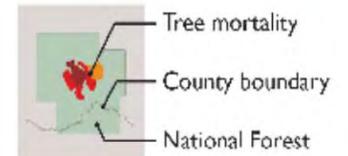
2014

2015

2016

FOREST HEALTH PROTECTION AERIAL DETECTION MONITORING

PROGRESSION OF TREE MORTALITY 2014, 2015, and 2016 Surveys



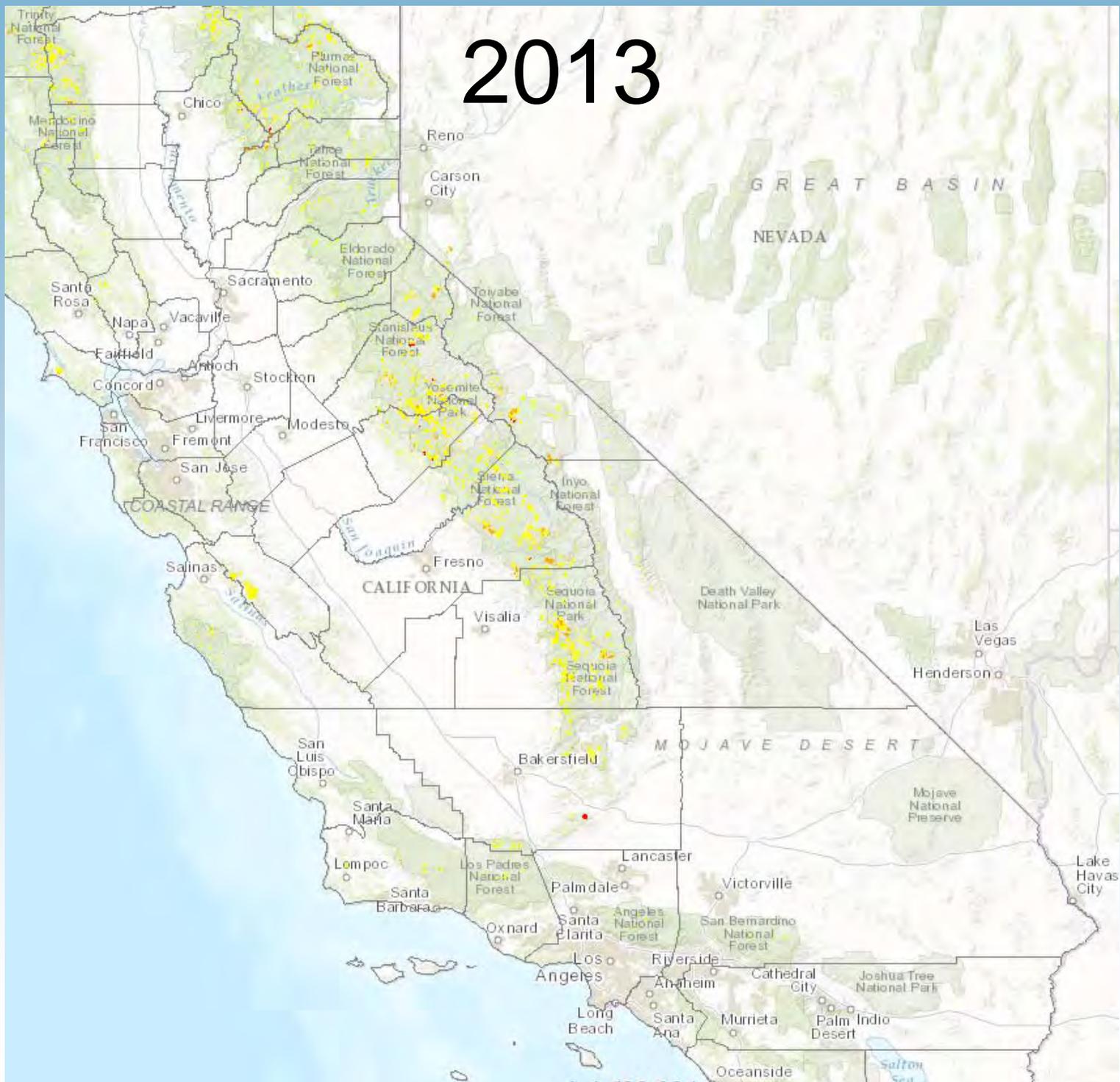
Dead Trees per Acre

- Less than 5
- 5 - 10
- 10 - 15
- 15 - 20
- 20 - 35
- More than 35

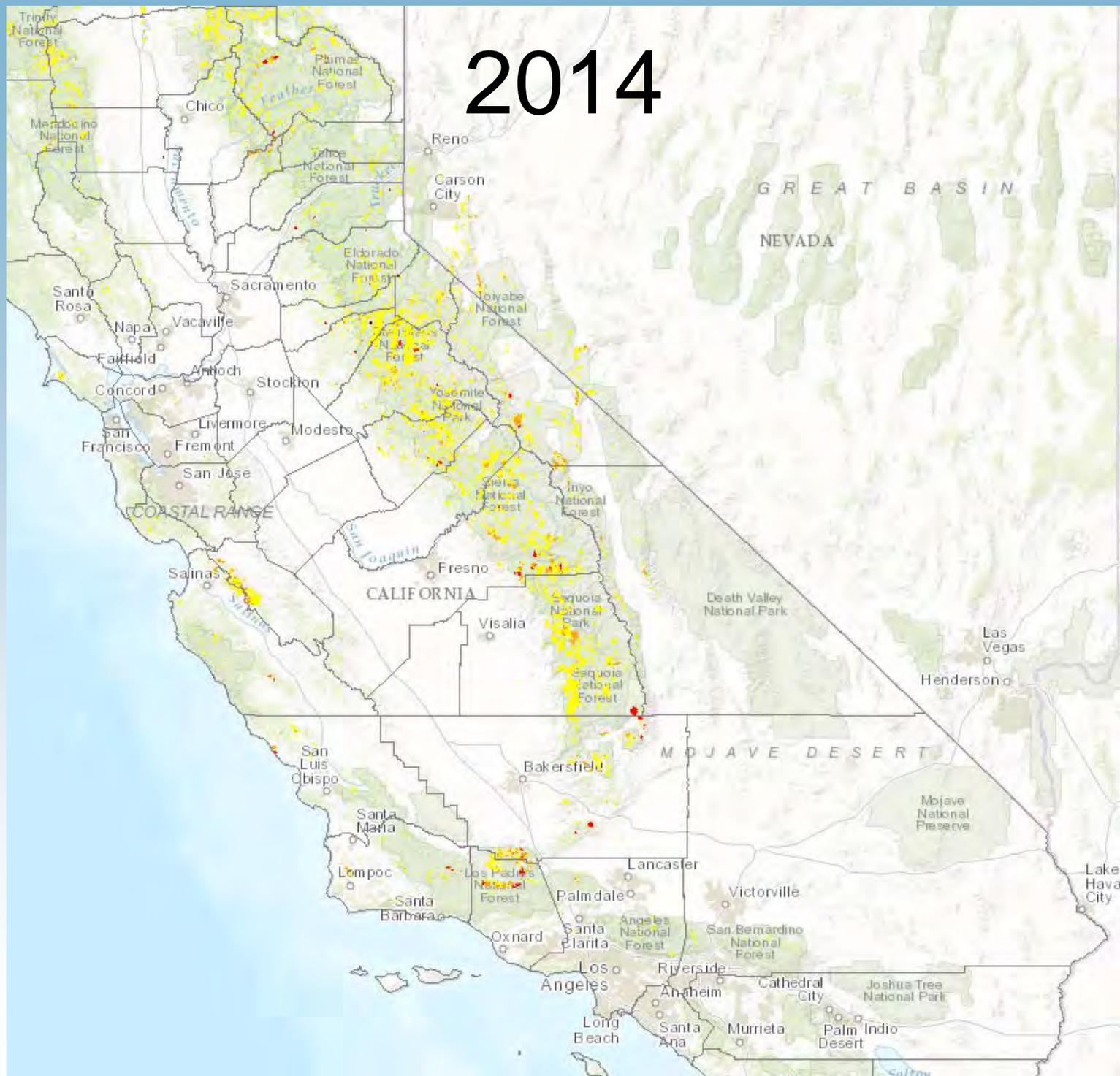


FOREST SERVICE

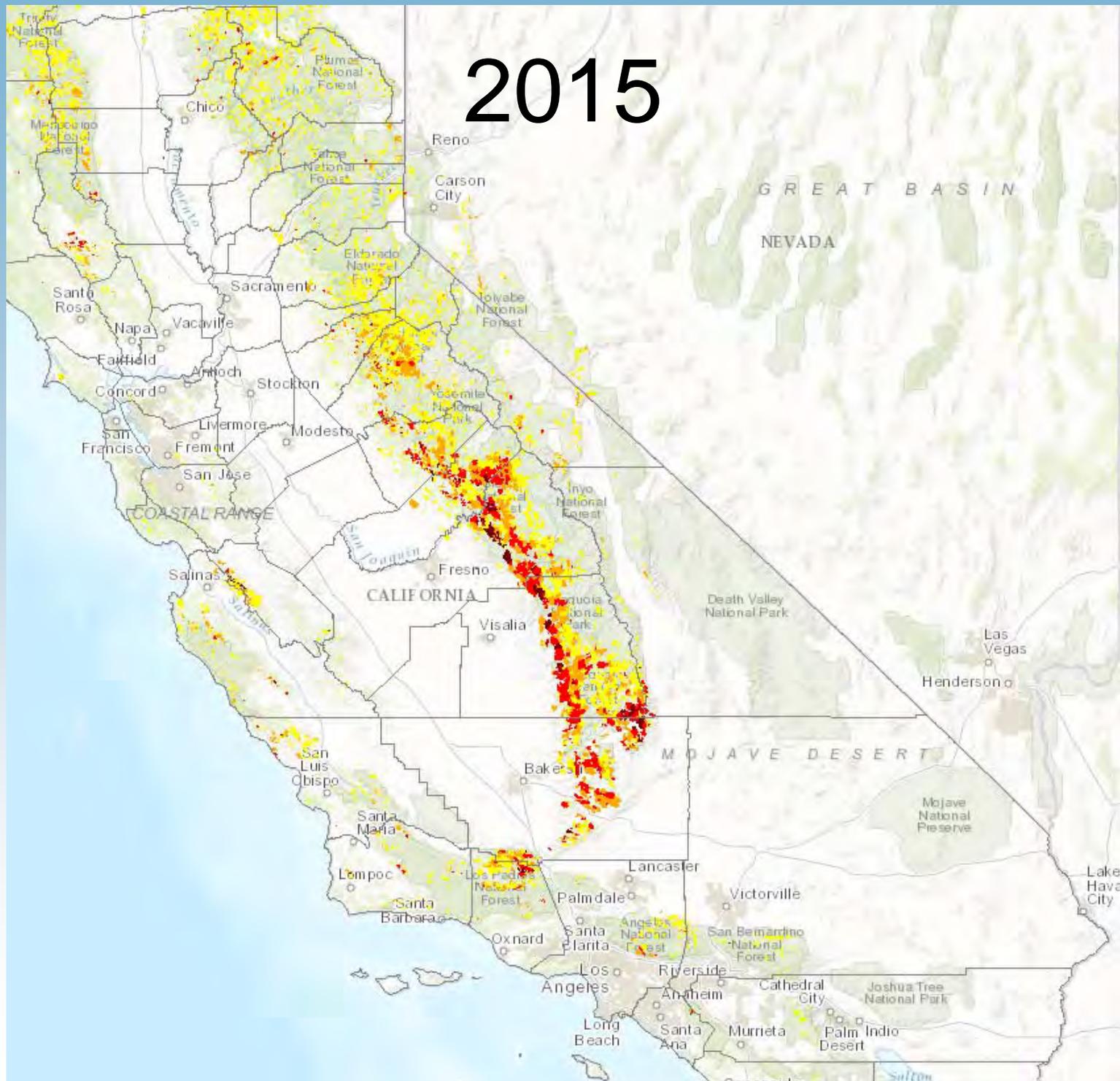
2013



2014



2015



Background

For more than six years, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has been actively involved in forest and community health issues. The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) was adopted by the Board in 2011 and was endorsed by all 22 Sierra counties as well as numerous other groups and organizations. It called for parties to work together in a collaborative manner with the objectives of restoring forests to ecological health and improving local communities' social and economic wellbeing.

As a part of SNFCI's ongoing work, the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) continues to represent a wide range of diverse perspectives unified by the common goals of increasing the pace and scale of restoration of the Sierra Nevada's forests and building healthier ecosystems, economies, and communities in the Sierra Nevada. Various forest collaboratives also continue their work to carry out this same mission on the ground in specific watersheds and communities.

In June 2014, the Board directed SNC staff to develop a plan that ensures the issues being addressed under SNFCI were the organization's top priority, which resulted in the [State of Sierra Nevada's Forests Report](#), which represents the current understanding of forest conditions and potential consequences. Recognizing that a more holistic approach to watershed health in the Sierra was needed, SNC staff worked closely with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Region 5 in the development and subsequent launch of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) on March 4, 2015. The WIP is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment and needed policy changes. The USFS is actively engaged in all aspects of the WIP, including general coordination, communications, funding development, policy, and project identification and implementation. In July 2015, SNC staff and representatives from USFS Region 5 met with Secretary John Laird and California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) staff, resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that commits the CNRA and USFS Region 5 to a cooperative state/federal collaboration to support the WIP. The SNC is designated as the lead state agency for coordination and implementation of the WIP.

In late June 2015, staff worked with the USFS and CNRA to have a portion of the Sierra Nevada Region included in [the designation of the California Headwaters as a Resilient Lands and Waters Region \(CA Headwaters\)](#). While this designation doesn't result in new funding for the Region, it does shine a light on the importance of the Sierra to California, and supports the work SNC and its partners are striving to accomplish through the WIP. SNC is currently in close collaboration with USFS in the development of communications materials and establishment of a working group in support of the CA Headwaters initiative.

Boardmembers Bob Kirkwood and Pam Giacomini continue to serve as the Board committee providing oversight and guidance for the WIP effort.

Current Status

WIP Regional Strategy

After a rich public comment period, and additional feedback from our agency partners, the WIP Regional Strategy has been finalized and posted to the WIP website, www.restorethesierra.org. Responses to commenters have been sent out capturing how comments were addressed. This is a dynamic document and we will continue to engage other key partners to ensure their expertise has a home in the WIP. Our partners from the Communications Team at USFS Region 5 are working with SNC staff to develop a more engaging visual representation of the WIP and the Regional Strategy in the form of a video animation project. This project should be completed and posted to the website sometime in mid-September, and will be available for a range of other opportunities to promote better understanding of and engagement in the WIP.

WIP Pilot Watersheds

Working closely with Boardmembers Bob Kirkwood and Pam Giacomini, SNC staff has continued to further refine the concept of WIP Pilot Watersheds. These pilots will be designed to explore new ways of doing the business of watershed restoration at an appropriate pace and scale. They will focus on developing new tools and/or expanding the use of existing tools to address governance, investment, planning, and implementation aspects of restoration efforts. These are not pilots in the traditional sense of the word. Many pilot projects already exist that focus on the testing of specific, on-the-ground restoration practices. There are also numerous large landscape pilots, in which the focus is on expanding the scale of restoration work beyond traditional boundaries.

The scale of WIP watershed pilots may not be uniform or limited to a particular watershed level. They may encompass a sub-watershed, watershed, or ecoregion, depending on the concept that is being tested and the conditions and opportunities available in a particular area. Staff is continuing to work with Boardmembers Kirkwood and Giacomini to finalize a pilot description that will guide the selection of these areas. The process will be largely opportunistic based on a number of factors, rather than a "call for proposal" approach.

The SNC continues to research and identify various governance models, underutilized tools, and financing that could most effectively be put on the ground and tested in pilot watersheds. SNC is also researching opportunities available within the infrastructure, products, and markets issues the Region is facing in the arena of wood and biomass processing.

Metrics

A wide range of suggestions for WIP metrics were provided during the WIP Regional Strategy public comment period, indicating both the importance and complexity of WIP metrics selection. SNC has determined that initially, the task before us is to identify a set of metrics that are already being collected by WIP partners on a regular basis that support the key values identified in the WIP Regional Strategy. A workgroup comprised of SNC staff and SNFCI Regional Council members has taken on the task of developing

this initial set of metrics, with an eye on future opportunities to explore deeper questions and data gaps as the WIP gains momentum and capacity through the engagement and commitment of new partners. The SNC's previous work on Regional indicators will be considered, as will other complementary efforts that are identifying metrics, such as the Forest Climate Action Team.

Sierra Cascade Dialog Group WIP Session

Established in November 2010 by USFS Region 5, the Sierra Cascade Dialog (Dialog) has been a series of conversations among engaged stakeholders on a range of issues across the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades, with a specific focus on the national forests in these regions. The goal of the Dialog is to create shared understanding among participants with diverse opinions, and to provide an opportunity for learning, shared meaning, aligned actions, mutual respect, and understanding different perspectives. As the co-founder of the WIP, USFS Region 5 has indicated that they see great benefit in utilizing the Dialog as both a vehicle for developing stronger partner engagement in the WIP, as well stronger alignment between the WIP and related USFS planning tools and processes. One such process is forest plan revision, which has been a focus of the Dialog for the past several years. The first WIP-focused Dialog is anticipated in early 2017, with the potential for subsequent meetings to follow.

Communications

In late May, staff participated in an event held to celebrate the signing of a Master Stewardship Agreement between the U.S. Forest Service and the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority. The Agreement will assist in advancing restoration and conservation in the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed, and provides a model for other restoration efforts in the Sierra Nevada Region. The communications team captured interviews at the event and developed a short video to highlight the important effort. The video was shared on SNC's Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube platforms in early July, and was shared with members of the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group and the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority. The U.S. Forest Service also shared the video with their 11 forests in the Sierra Nevada Region.

In June, staff helped organize a tour for science and policy staff from a variety of agencies at the Teakettle Experimental Forest. CalEPA, the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, CA Air Resources Board, and the CA Conservation Corps were all present. Our hosts, Matthew Hurteau, Malcolm North, and Mark Meyer, introduced participants to their research on forest treatments and carbon sequestration, and also touched on greenhouse gas emissions following wildfire. They have been tracking 25,000 trees on site for the last 20 years and according to their research, thinning and prescribed burning activities can help to maintain carbon stability because they reduce competition for the larger trees, which both absorb and store more carbon than the small trees and have a greater chance of surviving wildfire. Big trees are also good from a habitat perspective. Mark Meyer has been studying flying squirrels at Teakettle, and noted that they prefer the same large trees that also store the most carbon.



Staff had been working on logistics for a second summer tour in partnership with the Placer County Water Agency in the American River Watershed. However, the Trailhead Fire outside of Foresthill forced us to postpone the tour to late September. Staff will now be working to promote the tour as part of Sierra Nevada Watershed Protection Week, and will focus on getting key decision makers out on the ground to discuss the connection between healthy forests and a reliable water supply.

WIP Watershed Rapid Assessments

The USFS is developing a report on the findings of their initial WIP Assessment, which is a summary of Region 5's restoration needs in a variety of areas, including but not limited to vegetation treatments, meadow restoration, aquatic organism passage, road restoration, and abandoned mine restoration. This summary is drawn from the data the individual forests in Region 5 had already input into a GIS project database, and has some limitations, including different timescales depending on the forest (2-5 years), and varying levels of accuracy depending on each forest's engagement with this database. The USFS is checking the accuracy of the data from the report with individual forests. They are utilizing this opportunity to get more consistent contributions to the database, as well as encouraging forests to think and plan in a more long-term way about restoration needs. SNC anticipates receiving this final report, including a written description and tables of each forest's projects, soon. While this initial report won't yield the full range of needs and constraints the WIP had originally hoped to identify, it will provide a more complete picture of already identified USFS Region 5 restoration needs in one easily accessed place than existed before. Another outcome of the USFS WIP assessments is a GIS database query tool that can easily provide updated restoration needs on an ongoing basis, which will hopefully yield more comprehensive information over time.

SNC staff is working with the National Park Service (NPS) to identify a path forward for completion of their WIP assessments. This year marks their 100th anniversary, and they are well into the recreation season at this point, so staff time is at a premium. SNC staff has identified a way to move forward with NPS assessments that use data they have, plus some SNC staff mapping support, that will result in mutual benefit for parties. This work has begun with the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks, and next will be Yosemite. The anticipated completion date for this work was late August.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed their first “template” assessment on the Mokelumne watershed last month. They don’t expect to be able to do all areas by the end of the summer, but SNC staff has helped them to prioritize specific regions of the Sierra for first, second, and third “rounds” of assessment work. It may be that the BLM analysis extends into fall; SNC staff expects to continue working with them through completion.

WIP partners at the Sierra Coordinated Resources Management Council (SCRMC) have completed roughly two thirds of their WIP rapid assessments, which includes general information as to identified issues, restoration needs, plans, and organized efforts that exist in each WIP Watershed Assessment Area. The final third are anticipated for completion by the end of September.

Funding

SNC staff continues to meet with other funding agencies to promote projects in the Region and explore leveraging opportunities. Staff has organized and promoted numerous grant-writing workshops throughout the Region. These workshops have been focused on building the capacity of local partners to search for, apply for, and administer grants.

Staff has also been engaged in discussions to ensure that the SNC and the Region are included in future bond measures, cap and trade auction revenue, or other revenue generating mechanisms.

In July, SNC hosted and facilitated a meeting between SNFCI Regional Council members, other WIP stakeholders, and leaders from the Governor’s Forest Climate Action Team (FCAT). The purpose of the meeting was to provide feedback on the draft Forest Carbon Plan, which the FCAT is developing to provide forest carbon targets and an array of strategies to promote healthy forests that protect and enhance forest carbon and the broader range of forest environmental services for all forests in California. Close collaboration with this team may eventually result in the allocation of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds (GGRF) to watershed restoration in the Sierra Nevada Region.

GIS Tools

The SNC GIS team has developed online mapping tools to support the WIP, including a tool that assists in the planning for WIP pilot watersheds, and a WIP external investment tracker that includes a variety of data that answers questions about natural resource conditions and project needs. As the WIP continues to grow, these tools and data can be evolved and expanded to tell the story of the WIP, and assist in decision making on how to best restore and protect Sierra Nevada watersheds. These tools will also serve as critical components of the WIP hub. A demonstration of some of the information will be presented at this Board meeting.

Next Steps

Staff will work with the USFS and other partners to implement the WIP Regional Strategy, utilizing the new animated video version to increase understanding and commitment. Staff will also work with our SNFCI Metrics Workgroup in order to further refine the initial set of high-level, Regional metrics with which the effectiveness of the WIP will be gauged over time.

Once WIP Watershed Rapid Assessments are complete, SNC, USFS, and other WIP partners will start reviewing and ground-truthing the findings, followed by an analysis to determine the dominant storylines that emerge about the conditions, restoration needs, and opportunities in these Watershed Assessment Areas. SNC anticipates beginning to engage an initial set of local level WIP partners in discussions about the findings and opportunities offered by these assessments, as well as opportunities to engage in the implementation of the WIP at the watershed level, in the late fall or winter of 2016.

The SNC staff and WIP partners are also in discussions regarding the development of a stronger framework to engage our partners more actively in the WIP, including the formation of a WIP Steering Committee (public agencies) and/or WIP Advisory group (stakeholders), building as much as possible off existing groups and partnerships.

The SNC staff will continue to push towards the identification of at least two pilot watersheds for implementing these new restoration models on the ground, with the goal of replicating successful efforts across the landscape. Staff will also identify other efforts from which lessons can be learned and consider how to best translate for a broader application.

The SNC staff will continue to work in a variety of active roles in several task forces and teams to move WIP objectives forward, including, but not limited to, the Governor's Tree Mortality Task Force, Forest Climate Action Team, and the Prescribed Fire Memorandum of Understanding.

Staff and partners will continue to cement existing and cultivate new WIP partnerships by growing the list of WIP supporters and gathering information regarding their specific geographic and issue areas of most interest. The Sierra Cascade Dialog Group session in early 2017 will be an excellent tool for broadening our WIP partners and deepening their understanding of the program. Staff will also further its work in the four key areas of Policy, Funding, Communications, and Restoration Implementation. Staff will provide regular updates to the Board as to progress in the development and implementation of the WIP.

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.