

Sierra Nevada Conservancy- Six Month and Final Progress Report

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)**

Grantee Name: Community Services Employment Training, Inc (WildPlaces)

Project title: Tule River Site Improvement Project II

SNC Reference Number: SNC 070347

Submit Date: 3/1/2012

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6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. Final Reports should reflect the entire grant period.

Check one:

6-Month Progress Report

Final Report

Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

Describe in one concise, well-written paragraph, the most significant accomplishment that resulted from this grant.

There were significant reductions in trash and graffiti on the Tule River, significant increase in community involvement and peer-led volunteer clean-up events. These have promoted changes in user behavior resulting in better stewardship of the Tule River corridor, increasing notoriety and buy-in from local community, and a better understanding of the complex and inter-related nature of river stewardship activities. In total, there were 66 clean up days.

Increased youth participation is a cornerstone of our success and has provided WildPlaces with a large scale, consistent project by which to gain traction in the local and regional communities, while increasing the physical range of the project from just the Middle Fork Tule River to include upper Tule River and lower Tule River to Porterville.

2. WOW Factor

If applicable, please describe anything that happened as a result of the project or during the project that is particularly impressive.

One of the culminating positive factors was the development several self-directed partner groups, that have committed to adopt segments of the Tule River for long term stewardship. These groups are starting to take a leadership role by organizing their own clean-up events under the Rio Limpio Banner.

The SNC grant was paramount in providing funding which has allowed for improved resource conditions and better stewardship of the Tule River (clean water and improved recreation experience) increasing community sustainability. The grant has provided a large scale project that has been instrumental in giving WildPlaces a better foothold as nonprofit agency committed to improving and preserving natural landscapes in the southern Sierra Nevada. Increased visibility of WildPlaces has led to a strong partnership with the Sierra Nevada Alliance. Through their SNAP program, WildPlaces has received help with funding two temporary AmeriCorps members each year, over the last three years. Each member volunteers 1700 hours to improve the watersheds of the Southern Sierra's.

CSET's Sequoia Community Corps members would spend a week at a time along the Tule River and that experience provided them with an appreciation for the ecosystem and the importance of "Leave no Trace." Additionally the corpsmembers became voluntary docents educating the public about the importance river stewardship. This experience has led CSET to seek docent opportunities with the Forest Service for our corpsmembers.

3. Design and Implementation

When considering the design and implementation of this project, what lessons did you learn that might help other grantees implement similar work?

1. Strategic and early planning is important to have successful volunteer led events. Interagency coordination is essential when there are multiple partners working toward mutual goals and was a key factor to our success. On multi-partner projects such as this, it is essential to assign a primary coordination lead and hold periodic update meetings for all partners involved.
2. Consistency with program visibility and implementation promoted gradual but real change with river user behaviors and actions. Providing a mechanism for feedback from group leaders and volunteers helped to improve efficiency.
3. Throughout the grant tenure, getting the word out was critical. This included consistent press releases in the paper, radio, and television, at the right times, prior to events. It was also important to make direct contact by phone and in person to local

community groups and schools. Everyone is busy, so you really need to over contact people.

4. It is important to recognize volunteers and their involvement whenever possible. This was done through after clean-up barbecues funded by local partner groups, press recognition, and WildPlaces appreciation banquets.

4. Indirect Impact

Please describe any indirect benefits of the project such as information that has been developed as a result of the project is being used by several other organizations to improve decision-making, or a conservation easement funded by this grant that encouraged other landowners in the area to have conservation easements on their property.

Through the SNC grant and our involvement in the Rio Limpio branded program, we were approached by the Monache High School's Multi Media Technology Academy. They selected WildPlaces as business of the year, and worked to develop media materials to engage the public in the Rio Limpio Program. This included two to five minute interview videos highlighting what Rio Limpio was about, tee shirt designs for Rio Limpio events, Rio Limpio bumper stickers, Rio Limpio Banner, and trash bag logos featuring Rio Limpio. These media products were invaluable and represented a significant benefit for the program.

The education of watershed health to CSET corpsmembers was a valuable experience that the youth can add to their resumes. It also provided them with exposure to Forest Service staff and may lead to future opportunities for them as they seek employment. CSET staff and corpsmembers attended CSET's youth Great Camp and shared their watershed knowledge and also attended local community events with an educational 4 R's booth.

5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

If you worked in collaboration or cooperation with other organizations or institutions, describe those arrangements and their importance to the project. Also, describe if you encountered conflict in the project and how you dealt with it, or if there was conflict avoided as a result of the project.

The Tule River Partnership was formed using a collaborative approach involving the core SNC grant group, CSET, USFS, and WildPlaces. The long term goal of the Tule River Partnership is to create a watershed wide partnership base to continue clean-ups

and address larger watershed issues. Since its institution, increased sponsorship has been slowly growing improving community involvement and positive outcomes.

Regarding river cleanups, CSET worked closely in coordination with Wildplaces to ensure efforts were not duplicated but rather were complementary. For example, when Wildplaces would organize a volunteer cleanup excursion, CSET would send crews to assist and would not replicate the effort until the following month or choose a different effort to avoid unproductive site visits.

In the rural setting of the southern Sierra, there were some members of the community that distrusted the grass root efforts presented by WildPlaces to address the environmental problems on the Tule River. By being able to demonstrate long term consistency and sustainability with the Rio Limpio Program, many of these mistrust issues were abated. As of 2012, WildPlaces has received several community and national awards (previously reported) for their leadership and consistent contribution to local community work.

6. Capacity-Building

SNC is interested in both the capacity of your organization, as well as local and regional capacity. Please describe the overall health of your organization including areas in need of assistance. SNC is interested in the strength and involvement of your board, significant changes to your staff, size and involvement of membership. In addition, describe how your project improved capabilities of partners, or the larger community.

The fiscal and programmatic health of WildPlaces is very good and is growing. The organization has demonstrated 10-years of programmatic success, positively helping communities and natural habitat through direct, hands-on conservation and educational projects. WildPlaces has done this on a less-than-average budget for an organization having as much major success as WildPlaces has had. Extensive volunteer hours and in-kind investments from the community, membership and foundation/grant support have allowed us to slowly increase capacity to include one program director, two program coordinators, and one executive director, all full-time. Staff is supported and guided by an active and diverse Board of Directors (see attached). Additionally, WildPlaces pilots a Youth Board of Directors consisting of three youth from the local area who are voting members of the board and help in planning youth events.

There are evident and real improvements in the capabilities of partners with which WildPlaces and the Tule River Partnership engages through the Rio Limpio program and WildPlaces in general. Numerous participating groups now organize and

implement stewardship projects on their own energy and look to WildPlaces and the Tule River Partnership.

Financial and development assistance is needed in four ways: 1.) Sustain and adequately compensate one program manager and one executive director for multi-year employment investment, 2.) More fully develop and utilize the existing membership program as revenue source, 3.) Create a regional (southern Sierra and southern SJV) visioning process wherein regional conservation and education partners can better identify gaps, design solutions and collaborate action. This could be done in a two-day southern Sierra/SVJ Regional Visioning Retreat, 4.) Further develop the Tule River Partnership created and piloted as part of our effort to sustain the stewardship program on the river.

CSET’s partnership with Wildplaces and the US Forest Service was strengthened through this grant opportunity. Through focused coordination the partners were able to successfully and effectively fulfill contracted project outcomes and in some cases extend efforts beyond what was originally scoped. Both CSET and the US Forest Service are long standing organizations and overall health of the organizations is strong and stable. The Tule River Partnership brought CSET back to its Forest Service roots and led to CSET attending a variety of US Forest Service meetings such as fire preventions, My Forest Summit, trail maintenance, GPS training, heritage workshops and RAC meetings that allow us to explore increasing our capacity in the National Parks and Forest Service and, at the same time, seek out future funding opportunities that our valuable to this partnership.

CSET has an active Board of Directors that meets monthly and holds a yearly planning meeting to set yearly goals for the organization. During the life of this grant, CSET’s budget increased to over \$20 million due to the ARRA grants. In order to sustain the work we have been doing under the ARRA grants, CSET started a for profit subsidiary that officially launched in February 2012, Sequoia Energy Services.

7. Challenges

Did the project face internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Describe each challenge and any actions that you took to address it. Was there something that SNC did or could have done to assist you? Did you have to change any of your key objectives in response to conditions “on the ground”?

Challenge	How We Addressed It	What SNC Could Do
WildPlaces involvement in	Still an on-going problem.	SNC could help with

Challenge	How We Addressed It	What SNC Could Do
<p>implementing this grant was to identify and mobilize volunteer groups for clean-up events. While this work was completed well, there were limitations in efficiency due to other funding sources that partnered with us. For example, Sierra Nevada Alliance funded several interns which were utilized for this program, but which had term limitations for interns. This required training a new program lead each year which slowed the momentum and relationship consistency of the program.</p>	<p>WildPlaces has worked hard to bridge the gap by providing a detailed job description, working to keep a consistent partnership base that understands the project, and providing an overlap time frame between outgoing and incoming interns</p>	<p>developing a database of potential partners that grantees could access when looking to augment their program. It would also be helpful to have some workshops on how to attract long term community sponsors for ongoing programs, rather than relying on temporary grant funds. Provide long-term capacity building funds (i.e. multi-year salaried positions)</p>
<p>Lack of transportation to get volunteers to the work site has been an ongoing challenge. Tulare County is one of the largest and poorest counties in the State, with double digit unemployment rates.</p>	<p>Methods used to offset this consistent limitation included: Organizing car pools, use of Tulare County loop bus when available, seeking transport sponsors, targeting volunteer groups that already had a transportation source for their group.</p>	<p>This will be a continued problem when implementing grants in rural areas of Sierra Nevada. SNC could provide a transportation budget that would help with more than with just gas.</p>
<p>Producing changes in user ethics and behavior has been a consistent challenge with some user groups.</p>	<p>Dealing with local gang groups who use the river was a challenge. We have partnered with various gang task force agencies, and have been able to obtain funding from the Gang Prevention Activities Grant. This grant will be used to develop a team of mentors for removing of graffiti and developing prevention activities. Partnering agencies such as the Forest Service have worked in partnership with law enforcement agencies to keep a presence on the river and to</p>	<p>Gang related activities effect the Sierra Nevada on a State wide basis. SNC could work at the Regional level to develop partnerships dedicated to help with funding a comprehensive strategy.</p>

Challenge	How We Addressed It	What SNC Could Do
	restrict use of glass containers.	
Language and other cultural barriers	Both WildPlaces and the Forest Service have hired bilingual staff when possible and recruited volunteer leaders that were bilingual. To the extent possible, all materials were printed in both English and Spanish. Commercial media outlets such radio and television were chosen based on their outreach group and included both Spanish and English clientele.	Continue to provide bilingual materials for the Great Sierra Nevada Clean-up.

8. Photographs

Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit photos, slides or digital images whenever possible. These images will be used for SNC publications such as annual reports or on the website. Please make sure you clearly identify location, activity, and your project with each submitted image. Images will be credited to the submitting organization, unless specified otherwise.

Media packet will be enclosed and mailed separately.

9. Post Grant Plans

What are the post-grant plans for the project if it does not conclude with the grant? Include a description of the following (if applicable): (1) Changes in operations or scope; (2) Replication or use of findings; (3) Names of other organizations you expect to involve; (4) Plans to support the project financially, and; (5) Communication plans?

Post project plans are to continue the program with WildPlaces, USFS, CSET, and Sierra Nevada Alliance involvement. The project will be shifted to utilize core self-directed groups to initiate focused clean ups, which include local High Schools and other Community groups willing to adopt a segment of the river. One large scale collaborative event (the Great Sierra Nevada Clean-up) will be held annually.

10. Post Grant Contact

Who can be contacted a few years from now to follow up on the project? Please provide name and contact information.

Mehmet McMillan mehmet@wildplaces.net 760.447.1702

Chantel Medeiros chantel.medeiros@cset.org 559-732-4194 x684

SNC-approved Performance Measures: (Please list each Performance Measure for your Project, as identified in your Grant Agreement, and the results/outcomes.)

Project Highlights

Number of People Reached

- 3,420 people were reached. The public saw the visible difference the clean ups made and reinforced their habits of “leave no trace.” Recreational use was enhanced with the removal of litter and graffiti. In addition, new partnerships and community river stewardship paved the way to making this project sustainable in the future.

Resources Leveraged

350 volunteers at 4 hours/event x 18.50/hr	\$25,900
WildPlaces additional grant money	\$4,500
CSET in-kind planning and technical assistance	\$10,000
TCYC corpsmember uniforms and safety equipment	\$20,000
TCYC Recycling Education Specialists and Supervisor	\$3,080
1 ton truck to haul collected CRV material	\$42,029
Forest Service Region 5 FDAS Grant Proposal 2008	\$46,716
USFS match contribution	\$36,603
TOTAL	\$188,828

Number and Types of Jobs Created

- 2 full time AmeriCorp members, one of which was a River Steward Coordinator
- 1 partial salary for WildPlaces Director

- 10 partial funding for CSET administrative positions
- 7 direct project staff (SNC Coordinator and Crew Supervisors)
- 51 Corpsmember positions

Number and Value of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities

This project supported the regional economy by providing work projects for 53 CSET Sequoia Community Corps participants consistent with the mission of providing young men and women with job training, education, leadership, and environmental awareness through performance of community and conservation work. In addition, WildPlaces provided a career opportunity by hiring a River Steward Coordinator.

Data Collection: Several services were directly improved by the project, including increasing the capacity for outdoor recreation activities at the site and improved ecosystem services. By significantly decreasing the amount of litter and graffiti at the site, the project was able to greatly improve the quality of recreation services at the area offered to visitors by increasing beautification values.

In addition, by providing stewardship education to visitors of the site regarding topics such as “leave no trace”, the project created a self-sustaining benefit whereby these visitors would be able to continue to carry the message and practices of good stewardship -- thereby extend the project benefits beyond the project period.

Known market value of product or service

Outdoor recreation and natural resources in the United States all have considerable economic impact. While we were not able to estimate an approximate known market value of the services delivered in this project, we have placed the work within an economic context based on recently published research.

Outdoor Recreation: According to a report published for *The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation* by Southwick Associates in October 2011,¹ in 2006, the total contribution from outdoor recreation in the United States was over \$730 billion a year, generates 6,435,000 U.S. jobs and \$88 billion in federal and state tax revenues. This includes hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and the “human-powered” recreations such as hiking, camping, skiing, paddle sports and bicycling. The combined spending effect of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching associated with National Forest Service land totaled \$9.5 billion in annual retail sales, supported 189,400 jobs and provided \$1.01 billion in annual federal tax revenues. (All dollar figures are reported in 2011 dollars, except as noted.) According to the “2011 Special Report on Camping”, a study released by The Outdoor Foundation, Coleman and Kampgrounds of America (KOA), almost 40 million Americans participated in camping last year – contributing to the overall economy by

¹ “*The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States*” – Southwick Associates for The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, October 10, 2011 - <http://www.nfwf.org/Content/ContentFolders/NationalFishandWildlifeFoundation/HomePage/ConservationSpotlights/TheEconomicValueofOutdoorRecreation.pdf>

increased sales of equipment and tourism, among others. The overall impact of outdoor recreation can also be measured by the increased revenue from visitors in communities surrounding recreational areas and by the impact on property values of homes near recreation areas.

Ecosystem Services

As stated in the above cited report, ecosystem services are defined as including “*all the functions performed by nature that provide benefits to human...*” such as “*climate regulation, waste treatment, water supply, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and habitat provision.*” The report cites a study based on the work of Ingraham and Foster places the value of “Forest” ecosystem services to be valued at \$1,014.27 per acre.

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	<i>TIMELINE</i>	<i>STATUS</i>
Organize and set clean up schedules for monthly river clean ups	June 2008, March 2009, March 2010	Complete
Order supplies for monthly and large scale clean ups	June 2008, March 2009, March 2010	Complete
Conduct safety training for monthly clean ups	June 2008, August 2009, May 2010	Complete – In addition to monthly CSET staff safety trainings, CSET and WildPlaces conducted safety trainings prior to each large clean up event and CSET spike days.
Plan and coordinate large clean up events: Keep America Beautiful, Public Lands Day, and Earth Day	June 2008-, April2010	Complete – There were 6 large clean ups held.
Conduct monthly river clean ups including photo documenting each event and logging location and amount of trash collected to identify future trash bag dispenser sites and receptacles	July 2008, May-2011	Complete – There were 60 clean up days.
Conduct Keep America Beautiful-Great American Clean Up and evaluate clean-up effort	July 2008 & 2009	Complete
Forest Service presentations to Youth Corps and public	July 2008, May-September 2009	Complete
Conduct Wild Camp outreach and education program (five sessions each summer)	Summer 2008 & 2009	Complete

High school presentations about river clean up and watershed health	September-June 2008 & 2009 through April 2010	Complete
Conduct Public Lands Day Clean Up and evaluate clean up effort	September 2008 & 2009	Complete
Conduct GIS training for graffiti mapping	September-November 2008	Complete
Complete and submit six-month progress report to SNC	September 2009	Complete
Conduct Earth Day Clean Up and evaluate clean up effort	April 2009 & 2010	Complete
Conduct GIS graffiti mapping	April 2009-March 2010	Complete
Complete and submit 12-month progress report to SNC	March 2010	Complete
Complete and submit 18-month progress report to SNC	September 2010	Complete
Final Report/Final Payment Request	October 31, 2011	All work completed in September 2011. Final Report submitted on March 6, 2012.