

Sierra Nevada Conservancy-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: Placer County Department of Facility Services
Project title: Hidden Falls Regional Park – Fuel Load Reduction and Related Fire Safe Activities
SNC Reference Number: SNC070246 **Submittal Date:** 03/30/2012
Report Preparer: Valarie Bayne / Andy Fisher **Phone #:** 530-889-6819

Check one:

6-Month Progress Report
 Final Report

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

A. Progress Report Summary: (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)

All fuel breaks and perimeter clearing identified in the grant scope have been completed and field reviewed by SNC staff. All Terrain Mower has been purchased, received, and utilized in the clearing of grassland portions of the fuel breaks.

B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved: (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

All remaining work on Shaded Fuel Breaks has been completed. Design of interpretive panels related to shaded fuel breaks has been completed (see attached interpretive panel layouts). 18"x24" Panels will be fabricated and placed within kiosks near fuel break 'E'

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered: (Please describe what has worked and what hasn't; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

Use of inmate labor from the CalFire camp at Washington Ridge has been an efficient delivery method for clearing and chipping wooded areas of the shaded fuel breaks. The portions of Fuel Breaks north of Coon Creek are

only accessible during times of low water which caused a compressed schedule in the completion of these portions. In order to complete the project within the grant performance period, the use of inmate, Conservation Corps, staff, and professional contractors were utilized in late 2011 and 2012. Without the abnormally dry season, it may not have been possible to complete the work on schedule.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved: (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

Given the multi-year term of the grant agreement, Placer County has been able to provide follow up mastication and mowing of re-growth in shaded fuel breaks constructed prior to 2011. This has given staff a chance to test the all-terrain mower and masticator unit (grant funded by Placer County Air pollution Control Board). Both pieces of equipment have proven efficient in fuel break maintenance.

E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs: (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	Budgeted SNC Dollars	Actual Dollars
Fuel Break Clearing – Forested Brush areas	\$299,750	\$446,746.62
Perimeter Clearing	100,430	\$1,669.44
Purchase of all-terrain mower	40,000	\$42,136.31
Directly related administrative expenses	66,027	\$15,654.63
GRAND TOTAL	\$506,207	\$506,207

Explanation: (if needed)

The entire grant scope for Fuel Break Clearing and Perimeter Clearing is complete. Administratively, however, staff time was not differentiated between Fuel Break Clearing and Perimeter Clearing resulting in the low value of actual dollars accrued toward Perimeter Clearing and cost overrun shown for Fuel Break Clearing. Placer County requests the savings shown in Perimeter Clearing and Directly Related Administrative Expenses be applied to offset cost overruns in Fuel Break Clearing.

F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project? (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.)

1. Resources leveraged to complete this project: The following sources contributed to the fire risk reduction plan for Hidden Falls Regional Park.
 - a. Placer County General Fund and River Parkway Grant Program of the natural Resources Agency provided funding for a 12,000 gallon water storage tank, hydrant system, and emergency helistop - \$73,749
 - b. Funding for an emergency access bridge over Coon Creek is provided by Placer Legacy Open Space Trust Fund, River Parkway Grant Program, and administrative liability funds from Placer County Serer Maintenance Districts #1 and #3 - \$719,480
 - c. A masticator unit was funded by a grant from the Placer County Air Pollution Control District - \$60,000
 - d. California Conservation Corps provided additional labor funding for vegetation clearing of shaded fuel breaks through the Proposition 84 Grant Program - \$50,000

2. Impact on collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders / Capacity building within region:

The establishment and maintenance of shaded fuel breaks at Hidden Falls implements a specific wildfire mitigation action of the Placer County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). The Plan is a collaborative document adopted by local agencies within Placer County as a County-wide master plan for pre-disaster avoidance and preparedness. A list of participating agencies and plan details may be found at:

<http://www.placer.ca.gov/Departments/CEO/Emergency/Final%20Hazard%20Mitigation%20Plan.aspx> .

The plan was adopted in April 2010. The Hidden Falls Vegetation Management Plan was prepared in consultation with CalFire officials. Implementation of the plan provides a strategic fire fighting platform on one of the largest contiguous open space areas in western Placer County helping to protect over 7,500 acres of the Sierra foothill community.

3. Number of acres treated, including number of miles in length and width of fuel break and perimeter treatment, and amount of tonnage of fuels material removed:
 - a. Approximately 108 total acres were treated under this project
 - b. Approximately 3.2 miles of shaded fuel breaks were cleared to widths ranging from 200 to 300 feet
 - c. Approximately 7 miles of perimeter were cleared to a width between 5 and 15 feet
 - d. Approximately 2,000 tons of vegetation were removed

4. Resource values, including structures and types, watershed values, recreation values, etc., now protected by the fuel reduction work in the project area
 - a. Single family dwellings and agricultural buildings valued at \$55 Million (2006 values) on 6467 acres, comprising 364 parcels, are protected as a result of this project
 - b. Over 3 miles of Coon Creek and Deadman Creek watersheds are protected as a result of this project.
 - c. 1,995 acres of conserved open space with public trail rights are protected as a result of this project.

G. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies. (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

See attached maps and interpretive panel designs.

H. Next Steps: (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

Follow up maintenance of shaded fuel breaks and perimeter clearing will continue on an ongoing basis through the use of mechanical removal, grazing, and other methods. The entire 1,200 acres of Hidden Falls is expected to be open to the public in spring 2013.

Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY

Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:

(What partnerships did you initiate or strengthen as a result of this project? How did they affect the project outcome? If applicable, how did this grant increase your organization's capacity? What is your plan to sustain this increase?)

See Item F. above.

Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

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

The clearing and maintenance of over 100 acres of shaded fuel breaks reduces the risk of catastrophic wild fire at Hidden Falls Regional Park and 6,467 adjacent acres comprising 364 parcels with building improvements valued at \$55 Million. Many years of isolated ranching practices on steep terrain had led to the buildup of heavy understory throughout most the Hidden Falls' 1,200 acres. This fire risk reduction initiative at Hidden Falls is one of, if not the largest of its kind in northwestern Placer County.

2. WOW Factor

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

Staff on site at Hidden Falls Regional Park report a significant increase in the presence of raptors in the vicinity of the shaded fuel breaks. Multiple species of hawks are observed hunting in areas of reduced undergrowth.

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?

The work at Hidden Falls was performed by a combination of staff, professional contract, Conservation Corps, and inmate labor. A variety of machinery was used in the establishment and maintenance of the shaded fuel breaks and perimeter clearing including mastication, chipping, and limited burning. The shaded fuel breaks were constructed in varying terrain ranging from grass land to heavily overgrown woodland and from flat to 60% gradient. Placer County is prepared to share our experience with the strengths, weaknesses and cost efficiencies of each delivery method and strategies for varying terrain.

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.

N/A

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 vegetation management plan for Hidden Falls was produced in collaboration between County staff, a registered forester, grazing specialist, and fire officials from the Resource Conservation District, UC Cooperative Extension, and CalFire. The development and implantation of the plan was cooperative without conflict between stakeholders. The plan was designed with flexibility to make field adjustments during construction.

During the early stages of shaded fuel break construction, a member of the public expressed concerns over the purpose and extent of the vegetation clearing. County staff met on site to explain the overall plan along with the benefits to fire risk and forest health. It is expected that the posting of interpretive panels will help to answer future questions by the public as they use the trail system at Hidden Falls.

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.

Although reduced in staff size since the economic downturn beginning in 2007, Placer County remains among the healthiest local agencies in California. Through the investment of over \$10 Million in general funds to the Placer Legacy Program in the early 2000's, the Placer County Board of Supervisors has been able to leverage grant funding to complete the public access and hazard mitigation development of Hidden Falls Regional Park and is prepared to maintain the Park as part of the recreational facility inventory of Placer County. We look forward to the potential of partnering with SNC in the future grazing and agricultural activities at Hidden Falls. It is expected that grazing will be an integral component of vegetation management. Grazing will also support the agricultural goals of the Placer Legacy Program and offer educational opportunities through the proximity of the public to livestock on site.

The volunteer base at Hidden Falls Regional Park has grown and remains faithful and eager to provide labor for activities including vegetation control, trail construction, signage installation, and maintenance.

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”?

The remote access to Hidden Falls increases travel time and costs associated with the construction of shaded fuel breaks and perimeter clearing. The use of inmate labor helped to reduce the cost of the project.

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.

See attached maps, interpretive panels, and photos

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?

The entire 1,200 acres of Hidden Falls Regional Park will be open in 2013 with approximately 30 miles of trails for public use. The ongoing maintenance of Hidden Falls, including shaded fuel breaks and perimeter clearing, will be the responsibility of Placer County with support from volunteers and other agency support as available.

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.

Placer County Department of Facility Services
Attn: Andy Fisher, Park Planner
11476 'C' Avenue
Auburn, CA 95603
Office (530) 889-6819
Fax (530) 889-6819
afisher@placer.ca.gov

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

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California Conservation Corps members perform shaded fuel break clearing at Hidden Falls Regional Park



All terrain mower purchased by SNC grant funding.
This picture taken right after delivery. Since then it has been well used at Hidden Falls Regional Park. The chassis articulates from side to side allowing the unit to mow on steep hillsides.