

## **Narrative Descriptions**

### **a.) Detailed Project Description Narrative**

#### ***Project Description***

The purpose and overall goal of the June Loop Fuels Reduction Project is to decrease the likelihood of a large-scale, high-intensity wildland fire having catastrophic effects to the Grant Lake – Rush Creek 6<sup>th</sup> level sub-watershed, and the forests and human communities within this watershed. This municipal watershed directly supplies water to the June Lake Public Utility District. In addition, the City of Los Angeles diverts water for municipal use downstream of the project area.

This project is needed because over 70 years of fire exclusion has resulted in unnaturally dense forested stands, excessive amounts of standing dead and down tree material (much of it resulting from bark beetle infestations associated with overly dense forest conditions), and aspen stands heavily encroached by conifer tree species. In 2006, 35 acres of fuels reduction treatments were implemented in the June Lake Loop area. This project expands on that initial effort.

The specific scope of this grant application is for on-the-ground implementation on 89 acres of National Forest System lands of greatest importance to overall watershed health and resilience in the June Lake Loop area. These 89 acres are part of the much larger *June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project*, which was analyzed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) and approved by Inyo National Forest in July 2011 and authorizes fuels reduction treatments on 1,471 acres.

The 89 acres proposed here are in 4 units are known as A-01 (15 acres), DZ-07 (36 acres), DZ-08 (14 acres), and DZ-09 (24 acres). A map depicting these 4 units (and all others units authorized for treatment in the EA ) can be found in *Item 6, Supplemental and Supporting Documents* section of this application.

Work to be completed using SNC grant funds would include:

#### **Treatment Specifications for Units DZ-07, 08, and 09**

Within units DZ-07, 08, and 09, treatments would create 100-foot defensible space zones around recreation facilities and other developments on USFS lands, and at the boundary with private properties where there are homes or other developments. These fuels reduction treatments are specifically intended to comply with requirements for wildfire defensible space specified in CA Code 4291.

The 100-foot defensible space treatments would include:

- Select removal of small diameter conifers (e.g. generally less than 16" dbh) where they are colonizing in the understory of aspen stands and from below the canopy of larger trees (e.g. ladder fuels).

- Prune tree limbs on residual conifer trees to a height of 8 to 12 feet.
- Select removal of shrubs by hand cutting.
- Disposal of slash, as well as existing dead and down material, by chipping or piling and burning.

For the portions of units DZ-07, 08, and 09 that are beyond the 100-foot defensible space treatment zones described above, fuels reduction treatments would include:

- Tree thinning to an average leave basal area of 80 to 120 sq. ft./acre, depending on site quality. Thinning would occur from below, removing suppressed, intermediate, and a sufficient number of co-dominant trees to achieve the desired leave basal area. Favor retaining shade intolerant conifer species, such as Jeffrey pine or large diameter Sierra juniper. Retain and/or recruit for stands dominated by larger, older Jeffrey pine trees by thinning excess trees to reduce inter-tree competition. Protect remaining old-growth Jeffrey pine by removing all trees under and within at least 15 feet of the drip line of the old-growth tree(s), which may act as a fuel ladder.
- Construction of 4 to 7 temporary bridges would be required for equipment to access and remove biomass from proposed treatment units DZ-07 & 08 because there are multiple braided stream channels in these units which create “islands” of dense, overstocked conifers. Temporary bridges would be constructed using down logs to span the stream, with decking material laid across the log spans. In addition, decking material may be used as the foundation for skid trails to operate equipment in areas of moist soil within these two units, to avoid soil rutting and compaction.

#### Treatment Specifications for Unit A-01

Conifer removal from the overstory of Unit A-01 would be conducted according to the following specifications:

- Cutting of all conifer <24” dbh within the aspen stand, and the stand perimeter up to 1) 1 ½ times the height of aspen trees in the stand, 2) distance required to prevent remaining, adjacent conifers from carrying a crown fire or 3) up to 100 feet (to conduct treatments or process treatment by-products), whichever is greater.
- Conifers 24” dbh or greater may be retained if they are not in a position to carry a crown fire into adjacent forested areas. Only single trees of this size would be retained (i.e. no clumps).
- All conifers greater than 30” dbh would be retained.
- Removal of conifers would be conducted using mechanical equipment where feasible. Cut trees would be removed from the treatment unit perimeter by operating equipment on the drier areas at the edge of the stand, and cabling or lifting logs out of the stand. In addition, decking material may be used as the foundation for skid trails to operate equipment in areas of moist soil within these two units, to avoid soil rutting and compaction. Equipment would access the stand via existing roads, and no new roads would be constructed.

- In aspen treatment unit A-01, equipment access would require construction of approximately 4 temporary bridges to cross braided segments of stream.

Implementation of the fuels reduction work is anticipated to be conducted by experienced contractors working under the oversight of Forest Service contract administration and inspection specialists.

### ***Project Summary***

The purpose and overall goal of the June Loop Fuels Reduction Project is to decrease the likelihood of a large-scale, high-intensity wildland fire having catastrophic effects to the Grant Lake – Rush Creek municipal watershed. This project is needed because over 70 years of fire exclusion has resulted in excessively dense forested stands. In 2006, 35 acres of fuels reduction treatments were implemented in the June Lake Loop area. This project expands on that initial effort.

The specific scope of this grant application is for on-the-ground implementation in 4 units (totalling 89 acres) of National Forest System lands of greatest importance to overall watershed health and resilience. These 89 acres are part of the much larger June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project to be implemented by the Forest Service beginning in 2012.

Fuels reduction treatment activities would include; tree thinning and pruning to reduce stand density and ladder fuels, shrub cutting, wood hauling, and slash chipping, and piling. Several temporary bridges would be constructed. A wide variety of techniques and equipment are anticipated to be used to implement this fuels reduction work while also protecting the sensitive hydrologic features of this area.

### ***Environmental Setting***

The June Lake Loop area is an important and highly popular outdoor recreation area in Mono County, offering outstanding recreational opportunities based on beneficial use of water, such as fishing, boating, and swimming. Pine, mixed-conifer, and aspen are the dominant forest types in the June Lake Loop area.

Development in the June Lake Loop area is concentrated on several large patches of private land, which are fully surrounded by National Forest System land. Hundreds of homes, cabins, resorts, and other businesses are situated on the private land. The Grant Lake - Rush Creek 6th level sub-watershed is a municipal watershed which directly supplies water to the June Lake Public Utility District. The City of Los Angeles also diverts water for municipal use downstream of the project area.

**b.) Workplan and Schedule Narrative**

The Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management staff has extensive experience in planning and implementing fuels reduction treatments such as those planned for these 4 units of the June Loop Fuels Reduction Project. Excellent results have been achieved on similar projects in the past by contracting with well-established firms specializing in forestry and fuels reduction work. Contracting would be the method utilized to accomplish the work proposed in this grant application, with the exception of prescribed fire operations associated with the burning of slash piles. These operations would be conducted by fully-qualified federal prescribed fire managers. Funding for the slash pile burning is not requested through this grant, but would be an in-kind contribution from the Inyo National Forest.

The major components of implementation include: unit mapping and layout, contract preparation and award, on-the-ground implementation (temporary bridge construction, tree and shrub cutting, tree pruning, yarding, slash chipping or piling, and site restoration) with concurrent contract inspection and administration, slash pile burning, and required accomplishment reporting to SNC. Table 1, below, displays these major components.

*Table 1. Workplan and Timeline*

<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b><u>Resources Needed</u></b>	<b><u>Timeline</u></b>
Unit Mapping, Layout and Baseline Hydrology and Vegetation Monitoring (units DZ-08 and DZ-09)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff and Forest Hydrologist - 2 people	September – October 2012
Contract Preparation (units DZ-08 and DZ-09)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – 1 person	January – February 2013
6-month Progress Report #1	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	March 2013
Contract Award (units DZ-08 and DZ-09)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Contracting Officer’s Rep.	May – June 2013
6-month Progress Report #2	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	September 2013
On-the-Ground Contract Implementation in Units DZ-08 and DZ-09 (temporary bridge construction, tree and shrub cutting, tree pruning, yarding, slash chipping or piling, and site restoration)	Firm Specializing in Forestry and Fuels Reduction Work	September – October 2013

Contract Inspection, Administration, and Implementation Monitoring (units DZ-08 and DZ-09)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff and Forest Hydrologist – 2 people	September - October 2013
Unit Mapping, Layout, and Baseline Hydrology and Vegetation Monitoring (units A-01 and DZ-07)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff and Forest Hydrologist - 2 people	September – October 2013
Contract Preparation (units A-01 and DZ-07)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – 1 person	January – February 2014
6-month Progress Report #3	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	March 2014
Contract Award (units A-01 and DZ-07)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Contracting Officer’s Rep.	May – June 2014
6-month Progress Report #4	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	September 2014
On-the-Ground Contract Implementation in Units A-01 and DZ-07 (temporary bridge construction, tree and shrub cutting, tree pruning, yarding, slash chipping or piling, and site restoration)	Firm Specializing in Forestry and Fuels Reduction Work	September – October 2014
Contract Inspection, Administration, and Implementation Monitoring (units A-01 and DZ-07)	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff and Forest Hydrologist - 2 people	September - October 2014
Slash Pile Burning (units DZ-08 and DZ-09)	Inyo National Forest Fire Management Staff	November - December 2014
6-month Progress Report #5	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	March 2015
6-month Progress Report #6	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	September 2015
Slash Pile Burning (units A-01 and DZ-07)	Inyo National Forest Fire Management Staff	November - December 2015
Final Report	Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff – Grant Manager	Before March 1, 2016

## **c.) Restrictions, Technical/Environmental Documents and Agreements Narrative**

### ***Restrictions/Agreements***

None.

### ***Regulatory Requirements/Permits***

#### **Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board**

On July 13, 2011, a conference call was held between Inyo National Forest Vegetation Management Staff, the Inyo National Forest Hydrologist, and staff from the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board. On this call, it was agreed that Timber Waiver Category 4 with “in lieu” practices would apply to the contracted portions of the June Loop Fuels Reduction Project and that the Inyo National Forest would make application for the waiver in early 2012. Lahontan only requests applications be at least 30 days in advance of on-the-ground implementation. Detailed, approved notes from this conference call are attached in *Item 6, Supplemental and Supporting Documents* section, below.

#### **Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District**

Inyo National Forest prescribed fire managers work closely with the staff of the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD) to ensure all prescribed fire activities comply with District regulations and requirements. GBUAPCD has approved dozens of Smoke Management Plan for prescribed burning by the Inyo National Forest in recent years. A Smoke Management Plan would be submitted to GBUAPCD for their review and approval prior to the first expected prescribed burning associated with this project, scheduled for November – December 2014.

#### **CalTrans**

Encroachment Permit # 0911-NTK-0012, issued November 23, 2010, and valid through December 31, 2013, allows for the temporary placement of approved highway signs along state highways advising motorists of prescribed fire activities which may be visible from the highways. A copy of the permit is included in *Item 6, Supplemental and Supporting Documents* section, below. Permit will be renewed at the appropriate time.

#### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project was signed on August 15, 2011, by Jon C. Regelbrugge, District Ranger. All activities proposed in this grant application are authorized under this Decision Notice. A copy of the Decision Notice, Finding of No Significant Impact, and the Environmental Assessment (EA) are included in *Item 6, Supplemental and Supporting Documents* section, below.

## California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The San Bernardino Unit of CAL FIRE is the lead agency for CEQA compliance for this grant application. Working with CAL FIRE environmental planning specialists, Unit Forester Glenn Barley (RPF #2743) reviewed the *June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project EA, Decision Notice (DN), and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)* and determined that CEQA requirements would be satisfied for this project by tiering to CAL FIRE's *Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Proposed Administrative Regulations for the California Forest Improvement Program*. A copy Mr. Barley's cover letter, the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) Project Review Environmental Checklist, and other supporting documents are included in *Item 6, Supplemental and Supporting Documents* section, below.

### **d.) Organizational Capacity Narrative**

Key Inyo National Forest personnel all have a minimum of 10 years experience planning, implementing, and administering complex fuels reduction projects. The following are the key personnel who would be responsible for the successful completion of this project:

- Dale Johnson – Vegetation Management Program Leader and Forest Silviculturist would fulfill the role of Grant Manager and primary point-of-contact for all inquiries related to this project should SNC choose to fund this project.
- Sue Farley – Project Leader for the June Loop Fuels Reduction Project environmental analysis would ensure that all regulatory requirements and permits are in order prior to implementation and assist the Grant Manager to ensure all implementation, monitoring, and reporting is in keeping with the project workplan and schedule.
- Andrew Weinhart – Forestry Technician and certified Contracting Officer's Representative would be responsible for all on-the-ground work related to this project, including: unit mapping and layout, contract preparation, and contract inspection and administration.
- Erin Lutrick – Forest Hydrologist would prepare the Timber Waiver for regional water quality control board, assist in all unit layout, approve hydrologic feature protection measures, and conduct watershed resource monitoring.

The Inyo National Forest has successfully implemented many fuels reduction projects over the past decade, with the largest and most complex projects always relying heavily on contracting for services with well-established private firms to accomplish the work. Examples of these large, complex projects include: Mammoth Fuelbreak Project (2003), Portal Fuels Reduction Project (2010), and Crowley Communities Fuels Reduction Project (2011).

### **e.) Cooperation and Community Support Narrative**

The Forest Service collaborated with the June Lake Citizens Advisory Council by meeting on September 7, 2010 and with the June Lake Fire Safe Council by meeting on October 5, 2010 while developing the proposal. A news release to announce a public collaborative meeting was published and posted locally at June Lake public bulletin boards on September 29, 2010. This public collaborative meeting was held in June Lake on October 14, 2010 and was attended by representatives from: June Lake Volunteer Fire Department; June Mountain Ski Area; June Lake Chamber of Commerce; Friends of the Inyo; the Silver Lake Recreation Cabin Tract; and members of the June Lake community.

The Forest Service initiated tribal consultation with five Tribes for the June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project through personal phone calls in the preliminary phase of project development (Kerwin 2011). This early consultation resulted in a field visit to the project area on November 8, 2010 with a representative from one of these Tribes. In addition, formal tribal consultation letters were mailed on December 16, 2010 to those five Tribes. A representative from another Tribe provided their thoughts and concerns regarding the proposed fuels reduction activities in response to the consultation letter.

The Forest Service sent a scoping letter on December 15, 2010 to interested parties, adjacent landowners, and other agencies requesting input. A news release regarding the project proposal and public scoping letter was sent to the Inyo Register and other local news outlets on December 17, 2010. The announcement was broadcast on the Sierra Wave radio station.

Because the Forest Service implemented 35 acres of similar fuels reduction work near June Lake in 2006, many of the normal concerns raised during public scoping were not brought forth during scoping for this project. The fuels reduction work done in 2006 generally received positive reviews and thus only nine comment letters or calls were received in response to this project proposal. The majority of comments expressed support for the project and recognized the need for proposed fuel reduction actions.

### **f.) Long-Term Management and Sustainability Narrative**

The alternative selected in the Decision Notice for the *June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project Environmental Assessment* specifically recognizes the need for periodic maintenance for fuels reduction treatments to maintain their effectiveness over time. The Inyo National Forest has implemented numerous fuels reduction projects over the past decade and some of the individual treatments within these projects have already received one or more maintenance treatments. Maintenance for this project would be scheduled on an “as needed” basis, but is anticipated to only be necessary every 10 to 20 years.

Maintenance treatments for the 4 units proposed in this application would be funded

through the annual congressionally-authorized appropriations to the Forest Service for fuels reduction work. Maintenance treatments of these specific units are anticipated to be substantially less expensive than the initial treatment effort.

### **g.) Performance Measures Narrative**

#### **Number of People Reached**

Information sharing and education during plan development (scoping) is summarized below. Prior to and during implementation, additional information will be provided via mailings and news releases to local media outlets.

- Over 700 property owners in the June Lake Loop area to potentially benefit from the project
- 350 letters mailed to residents and business owners closest to units planned for on-the-ground implementation
- Public field trip included representatives from the June Lake Chamber of Commerce, Fire Department, FireSafe Council, June Mountain Ski Area, and local environmental group
- Presentations at Fire Safe Council and Chamber of Commerce regularly scheduled meetings

#### **Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada**

Should the SNC decide to fund this proposal, the \$327,500 grant would target forest and watershed health benefits on the 89 acres previously described. Funding for slash pile burning is an in-kind contribution from the Inyo National Forest, valued at \$44,500. The remaining 1,382 acres of forested land scheduled for treatment in the June Loop Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project would be completed using the annual congressionally-appropriated funding to the Forest Service for fuels reduction work. The cost to complete treatments on the remaining 1,382 forested acres is estimated to be \$1,255,806.

#### **Number and Type of Jobs Created**

The jobs created from this grant award would be exclusively in the private sector. This type of work is highly seasonal in nature and contractors typically hire large numbers of temporary workers during their busy summer and fall period of operations. This grant would generate 6 – 7 full-time equivalent forestry worker jobs and 1 full-time equivalent supervisory forestry worker job. All jobs would be temporary.

#### **Number of New, Improved or Preserved Economic Activities**

The June Lake Loop offers outstanding opportunities for fishing, hiking, horseback riding, boating, and during the winter months skiing at June Mountain Ski Area. Development in the June Lake Loop area is concentrated on several large patches of

private land, which are fully surrounded by National Forest System land. Hundreds of homes, cabins, resorts, and other businesses are situated on the private land.

As was also discussed earlier, the forested acres proposed for treatment here are within the Grant Lake - Rush Creek 6th level sub-watershed, a municipal watershed which directly supplies water for the June Lake Public Utility District. The City of Los Angeles also diverts water for municipal use downstream of the project area.

Natural disasters such as wildland fires can cause extreme economic hardship in recreation-oriented communities until there is some degree of recovery, often requiring a period of many years for full recovery. Implementation of the June Loop Fuels Reduction Project could potentially preserve a vast portion of these economic activities and their infrastructure, which could otherwise be at high-risk to loss to a large-scale, high-intensity wildland fire.

#### *Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected or Restored*

Funding of this grant application would provide direct stream bank benefit to 9,504 feet (1.8 miles) of stream bank along Reversed Creek, Yost Creek, Fern Creek, and other unnamed creeks. Stream bank benefit would be in the form of both protection and restoration. The project would reduce the likelihood of excessive runoff, erosion, and sedimentation associated with a high-intensity wildland fire, and restore riparian shrubs, forbs, and grasses by removing some of the heavy conifer encroachment.

#### *Acres of Land Improved or Restored*

Four units totaling 89 acres would directly be improved and restored by the funding of this grant application. Hazardous fuels would be significantly reduced, forest health and resilience would be improved through reduced inter-tree competition, and aspen and other native riparian vegetation would be enhanced via reduced conifer encroachment. CalFire Hazard Severity Zoning Map and the Mono County Community Wildfire Protection Plan indicate the communities in closest proximity to the project area are generally ranked as High to Very High, with one community ranked Moderate and one ranked Extreme.

## Appendix B3

### SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY PROPOSITION 84 - DETAILED BUDGET FORM

**Project Name:** June Loop Fuels Reduction

**Applicant:** USDA Forest Service, Inyo National Forest

<b>SECTION ONE DIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>Year One 2012</b>	<b>Year Two 2013</b>	<b>Year Three 2014</b>	<b>Year Four 2015</b>	<b>Year Five 2016</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unit Mapping and Layout	\$1,900.00	\$1,900.00				\$3,800.00
Contract Prep and Award		\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00			\$3,200.00
Contract Implementation		\$125,100.00	\$167,400.00			\$292,500.00
Contract Inspection and Admin.		\$2,600.00	\$3,200.00			\$5,800.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
<b>DIRECT COSTS SUBTOTAL:</b>	\$1,900.00	\$131,200.00	\$172,200.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$305,300.00

<b>SECTION TWO INDIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>Year One 2012</b>	<b>Year Two 2013</b>	<b>Year Three 2014</b>	<b>Year Four 2015</b>	<b>Year Five 2016</b>	<b>Total</b>
Monitoring	\$800.00	\$800.00	\$800.00	\$800.00		\$3,200.00
Performance Measure Reporting	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$600.00	\$3,000.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
<b>INDIRECT COSTS SUBTOTAL:</b>	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$600.00	\$6,200.00
<b>PROJECT TOTAL:</b>	\$3,300.00	\$132,600.00	\$173,600.00	\$1,400.00	\$600.00	\$311,500.00

<b>SECTION THREE Administrative Costs (Costs may not to exceed 15% of total Project Cost) :</b>						<b>Total</b>
Organization operating/overhead	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$16,000.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE TOTAL:</b>	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$3,200.00	\$16,000.00
<b>SNC TOTAL GRANT REQUEST:</b>	\$6,500.00	\$135,800.00	\$176,800.00	\$4,600.00	\$3,800.00	\$327,500.00

<b>SECTION FOUR OTHER PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>Year One 2012</b>	<b>Year Two 2013</b>	<b>Year Three 2014</b>	<b>Year Four 2015</b>	<b>Year Five 2016</b>	<b>Total</b>
Forest Service In-Kind (Pile Burning)			\$19,000.00	\$25,500.00		\$44,500.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
<b>Total Other Contributions:</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$19,000.00	\$25,500.00	\$0.00	\$44,500.00