## 5a. DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION NARRATIVE

### Project Summary

The purpose of our proposed project is to reclaim public land in the Sierra Nevada's used to illegally grow marijuana. Reclamation entails removal of all non-native materials from the grow sites, including irrigation tubing, fertilizer, insecticides, rodenticides, other chemicals, personal gear , trash, fuels, and other items. Reclamation also involves mitigation of water problems and fire hazards. The benefits of this project will be reclamation of each site.

### Environmental Setting

Land used in the areas to be reclaimed is in the National Forests in the Sierra mountains. The areas are habitat for a variety of plants and animals, including endangered species such as the Fisher. The area reclaimed will be made habitable for native plants and animals.

### Project Description including Goals/Results, Scope of Work, Location, Purpose, etc.

At each grow site, we investigate and handle irrigation tubing, fertilizer, fuels, pesticides/rodenticides, poaching, garbage, water diversions and fire hazards.

Irrigation drip line does not decay, so it is vital that it be removed. The average length of drip line per site in the Mendocino National Forest was over one mile.

The average quantity of fertilizer found per site on the Mendocino National Forest in 2010 was nearly 700 pounds! Excess fertilizer ends up in the ecosystem. Also, we often find many bags that were not used. The contents will eventually be spilled. All of the excess fertilizer ends up in our water supply.

Growers use propane to cook. Propane will leak from the container as it rusts or burn violently in a wildfire.

Pesticides and rodenticides are used to protect growing marijuana from rodents and insects. These are non-selective killers and work their way up the food chain from mouse or rabbit to predators. We often find pesticides that are smuggled from Mexico. These materials are highly toxic to all animals, including humans. We routinely find that the pesticide containers have been gnawed by animals.

We often find evidence that deer, bear, and grey squirrels are poached and, sometimes, skunk and even a ring-tailed cat.

Food refuse and chemical containers accumulates at the site. The typical site holds nearly 1000 pounds of non-native material. We often see evidence that animals eat, or attempt to eat, the garbage, scattering the waste. This material should not be left to decay in the Forest.

We estimate that an average of 2.2 million gallons of water is diverted per grow site. A stream is generally dammed and often water is routed to an open pit lined with plastic tarps. Fertilizer and pesticides are mixed in the water which supplies the plants. We have found water pits that measured 22 feet long and 10 feet across. Our crews remove the pit lining and fill the pit so an animal falling in can get out.

Growers cut shrubs, limbs, and trees in order to create a canopy that will let in light for their plants, yet leave it hard to see from the air. The dried branches piled up around the site create a fire hazard and a trap for animals.

**Project Goals/Results and Scope of Work**

The Central Sierra Reclamation Project aims to perform restorative work on 120 sites across 14 counties in four SNC sub-regions.

Law enforcement committed to provide us with GPS coordinates for grow sites as well as any pertinent data on site accessibility and characteristics.

Our crew will develop a work plan which factors in terrain, chemical hazards, access, acreage of effected land, water diversions, etc.

Trained leaders will enter and inventory the site and render it safe for cleanup.

We will consolidate and package the non-biodegradable tubing to be removed and recycled.

Our crew will contain and remove non-native debris in the form of clothes, tents, food, chairs, stoves, plastic buckets, and tin cans. This debris will be taken to a waste facility or be recycled.

We will use certified HAZMAT specialists, where necessary, to process all chemicals and fuels within governmental guidelines.

Water pits will be made safe and the in-stream dams will be removed.

Openings will be cut in the brush piles to allow animals to transit the grow sites. This will also reduce the fire hazard.

We will conduct S.W.A.M.P. testing at the target grow locations which will yield data for future watershed protection studies.

Site restoration efforts will ultimately lead to increased safe accessibility to public lands.

We will prepare a comprehensive site analysis after reclamation is complete. This analysis will summarize what we found and processed. It will also identify any remaining issues.

The consensus among law enforcement is that site reclamation is a deterrent to keep growers from returning to an area.

One of our crews' highest priorities is to stop lingering contamination after the plants have been eradicated and the growers removed.

**Location**

Our reclamation project will take place in four National Forests: Sierra, Stanislaus, Lassen and Plumas.

## 5b. WORKPLAN AND SCHEDULE NARRATIVE

We will work with USFS law enforcement to designate the one-hundred and twenty sites intended for restoration by prioritizing the hundreds of potential sites in the Sierras. A work schedule will then be developed to insure that our crew and law enforcement will both be available on the same dates, weather permitting.

We will ensure the appropriate preparedness level of the crew, both in supplies and skills. We have a Job Hazard Analysis system that we jointly developed with the Forest Service for use in reclamation operations (including helicopter operations).

Restoration operations will begin in the early spring as soon as Forests are accessible.

Aviation assets will be necessary to remove debris from the grow sites. Our crew has experience working with many types of aviation assets. One Sheriff's Department, Butte County, has offered a donation of one of their helicopters for this operation.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

| DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES | TIMELINE |
|---|---|
| Solidify project planning dialog with Law Enforcement entities on Lassen, Plumas, Stanislaus and Sierra National Forests | September 2012 |
| Generate target site listing thus specifying the work load for restoration project | September 2012 – December 2012 |
| Acquisition of restoration field supplies, training materials, crew members | September 2012 |
| Conduct skills based training regime for ERT crew members | |
| Develop and produce operational sheet for grow site restorations taking place in Fall 2012. | September 2012 – November 2012 |
| Collate data collected during FY2012 for year-end report to USFS | September 2012 |
| Begin site restoration operations on the Sierra National Forest | September 2012 |
| Begin site restoration on the Stanislaus National Forest | October 2012 |
| Begin site restoration on the Plumas National Forest | February 2013 |
| Begin site restoration on the Lassen National Forest | March 2013 |
| Six Month Report to SNC staff | February 2013 |
| Utilize aviation assets to remove debris from forest at project area transition periods | November 2012, April 2013, August 2013 |
| Recycle irrigation drip line and dispose of waste throughout duration of operation | September 2012 – August 2013 |
| S.W.A.M.P. site testing conducted throughout project duration | September 2012 – August 2013 |
| Collate data collected during FY2012 for year-end report to SNC staff | June 2013 |
| Produce final report at completion of grow site restoration project | August 2013 |

## 5c. TECHNICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS

**Restrictions/Agreements:**
This Project has no land restrictions. Land access is granted by the USFS via our Regional Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement between USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region and the High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew Agreement # 09-CS-11052007-226.

**Regulatory Requirements/Permits:**
This Project declares that permits are not applicable as all authorizations are provided under our Regional Master Cost Share Agreement (see above).

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):**
This Project has a Notice of Exemption filed by the California Department of Fish and Game: SJVSSR under Class 21 Section 15321.Enforcement Actions by Regulatory Agency. This NOE covers all project areas within this grant request.

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):**
This Project has Decision Memos from the Sierra, Lassen and Plumas National Forests for Category of Exclusion stating that this project is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The project is within category Civil and Criminal Law Enforcement and Investigative Activities, 36 CFR Ib3(a)(5). This category, established by the Chief, does not require a project or case file or a decision memo and may be implemented immediately.

## 5d. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY NARRATIVE

The High Sierra Volunteer Trail Crew (HSVTC) has been performing reclamation since the spring of 2005. We created a separate division of the HSVTC, the Environmental Reclamation Team (ERT), in order to focus on this arena. We have worked in National Forests, California State Parks, Native American land as well as private property. We have been recognized locally and nationally for our work. We have developed strong relationships with all levels of law enforcement agencies.

Our primary ERT leadership has been in place since the inception of our program. We have added additional capable people each year. Our existing staff will be able to plan and manage this project.

We have an emphasis on safety in all aspects of our work. We have trained our staff in hiking safety, GPS usage, potential hazard material processing, aviation procedures, and proper packaging of refuse. We have jointly developed a Job Hazard Analysis with the Forest Service.

## 5e. COOPERATION AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT NARRATIVE

Grow site restoration is a field of environmental activity that necessitates partnerships because of the unique responsibility of various entities. We have listed some of these partnerships below:

United States Senator Dianne Feinstein

The United States Forest Service, Region V

- Sierra National Forest
- Stanislaus National Forest
- Lassen National Forest
- Plumas National Forest

The California Department of Fish and Game, Law Enforcement, Central & Northern Regions

Fresno County Sherriff's Department

Tulare County Sheriff's Department

Madera County Sheriff's Department

Merced County Sheriff's Department

Tehama County Sheriffs Department

Butte County Sherriff's Department

California National Guard Counterdrug Program Team Hawk & Wolf

California Highway Patrol

Cal-Trans

United States Army

United States Marine Corp

Gavilan Community College

Pacific Gas & Electric

Southern California Edison Companies

We have letters of support from many of these organizations.

## 5f. LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY NARRATIVE

The Forest Service has primary responsibility for the health and safety of our National Forests. They identify the sites where marijuana needs to be eradicated and monitor those sites after eradication to insure that no further growing operations return. However, we also help in assessing Forest usage because we routinely return to areas that have had growing operations in the past. Our strong relationships with law enforcement ensures that new grow sites will be dealt with quickly.

We also help the Forests in another way. We record all of the fertilizers, pesticides, etc. that we find at each grow site. We then assist Forest biologists that are studying animal die-offs (or other affects) to see if there are grow sites in close proximity to their study areas. An example of this collaboration is our work with biologists that are studying the Fisher.

## 5g. PERFORMANCE MEASURES NARRATIVE

**A. Common to All Categories**

1. Number of People Reached –Hundreds?
2. Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada –$299,400 in volunteer hours, $192,000 from Federal law enforcement, $51,300 in non-federal law enforcement support, State (Fish and Game ) and County law enforcement (Sheriffs) and Air National Guard $448,200, for a total of $990,900.
3. Number and Type of Jobs Created – 6 full-time professional services jobs
4. Number of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities –6000 acres of Forest habitat will be restored plus the accompanying watersheds.

**B. Common to Site Improvement & Acquisition Categories**

5. Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created
6. Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected or Restored – 2400 feet of restored stream bank.
7. Number of New Recreation Access Points
8. Number of Special Significance Sites Protected or Preserved –5 historical sites.
9. Tons of Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided

10.Measurable Changes in Knowledge or Behavior – Increased understanding of the dangers associated with illicit growing operations. Reduced fire dangers from mitigation activities.

**C. Acquisition Only**

11.Acres of Land Conserved

**D. Site Improvement Only**

12.Acre Feet of Water Supply Conserved or Enhanced –7 acre-feet of water reclaimed per grow site or 840 acre-feet for the 120 sites of this project. In addition, these sites will no longer have polluted runoff containing fertilizers and other chemicals.

13.Acres of Land Improved or Restored –6000 acres of Forest habitat will be restored plus the accompanying watersheds.

14.Acre Feet Per Annum of Streamflow Improved –7 acre-feet of water reclaimed per grow site or 840 acre-feet for the 120 sites of this project.

15.Feet of Trail/Path Length Constructed or Improved –60 miles.

16.Mass of Pollutants Reduced Per Year –1000 pounds per site or 60 tons for the 120 sites to be reclaimed.

**E. Pre-Project Planning**

17.Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments

18.Percent of Pre-Project and Planning Efforts Resulting in Project Implementation

19. Measurable Changes in Knowledge or Behavior