

## **Narrative Descriptions - Detailed Project Description**

### **Introduction**

Part of the unique make-up of the Sierra National Forest (SNF) is its local ranchers and grazing permit's that have been actively using the forest for forage since 1905. Currently the SNF authorizes livestock grazing that supports cow/calf operations for twenty-one families (including multi-generation ranches) with base ranches located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The United States Forest Service (USFS), Bass Lake Ranger District (BLRD), makes forage available to qualified livestock operators, utilizing lands deemed suitable for grazing, which is consistent with land management plans. This is done not only to continue the grazing tradition and culture of this region, but also to (1) contribute to economic diversity and to (2) promote stability for communities that depend on range resources for their livelihood.

### **Project Goal**

The Long Ridge Allotment Rangeland Improvements Project (LRARIP) will protect riparian areas from livestock impacts while improving livestock distribution within agricultural lands by improving efficiency and providing economic benefits to several local ranchers operating in the Sierra Nevada. Moreover, the results of the LRARIP will serve as a model for other rangelands in the SNF as well as neighboring National Forests, acting as a pilot project for the region.

The LRARIP will improve livestock distribution by providing off-site livestock water developments which in turn; (1) improves use and condition of upland forage, (2) reduces localized impacts, (3) improves riparian conditions, (4) increases integrity by protecting springs and seeps from cattle impacts, and (5) improves the facilitation of livestock handling through construction of much needed handling facilities. Through this project, ranchers will be able to focus solely on overall livestock distribution and rangeland management needs instead of spending a disproportionate amount of time focusing on localized areas. Furthermore it will enable ranchers to achieve full compliance with USFS grazing permit standards and guidelines (e.g. utilization standards) ultimately resulting in healthier watersheds for both the human and wildlife communities.

The deliverables of the LRARIP will protect riparian areas by developing off-site water facilities/structure that attracts livestock out of sensitive areas resulting in minimized livestock impacts. The materials requested under this proposal would be used to construct, in partnership with the ranchers, necessary livestock handling facilities that will improve efficiency by cutting down on labor costs while easing the handling of livestock management. The use of the Long Ridge Allotment makes a year-round cow/calf operation possible for two local Sierra Nevada foothill ranching families while also, improving the health of the rangeland which is critical to the sustained use of this area by these families and others for years to come.

### **Project Scope**

The Long Ridge Allotment is a USFS grazing allotment used annually for spring forage from March through June by two Sierra Nevada foothill ranchers; (1) Gary and Tawny Pamplin of Clovis, California, who own a 125 cow/calf pair ranching operation

and (2) Jay TeVelde of Three Rivers Sequoia Ranch, LLC of Three Rivers California who owns a 300 cow/calf pair ranching operation (Table 1). These ranchers incorporate the use and management of the Long Ridge Allotment in order to sustain a year-round cow/calf operation.

Table 1. Summary of Sierra Nevada Ranchers Operating on Long Ridge Allotment.

Ranchers Name	Season of Use Permitted	Number of Cow/Calf Pair Permitted	Base Ranch Location
Gary and Tawny Pamplin	March 1 through June 30	101	Clovis, CA
Three Rivers Sequoia Ranch, LLC (Jay TeVelde)	March 1 through June 30	40	Three Rivers, CA

Both the SNF and Resource Management Plan (RMP) state that desired condition for springs and seeps is one which the distribution and health of biotic communities in special aquatic habitats (such as springs and seeps) perpetuates their unique functions and biological diversity. The work completed under the proposed grant project will occur in phases over a three year period of time. Each project has been prioritized by the BLRD based upon current degree of damage and results associated with the deliverable. The BLRD has identified four site-specific projects on the Long Ride Allotment, the work proposed in each is described in detail as follows:

### 1. Horseshoe Bend Trail Spring Enclosure and Livestock Water Development

Currently the Horseshoe Bend Trail Spring area is being excessively impacted by livestock and is in need of protection from those livestock impacts. In order to move towards the outlined desired condition it is necessary to both project and improve (1) forage, (2) vegetative and (3) soil conditions in this area. To do so we are proposing to construct a ~ 100 foot x 100 foot barbed-wire fenced enclosure around the perimeter of the springs and seep area adjacent to the Horseshoe Bend system Trail (USFS TRAIL #23E15) and to develop an off-site livestock water (e.g. trough) an appropriate distance away from the sensitive riparian areas. Livestock use would be prohibited within the fenced enclosure to protect the spring head until riparian vegetation and soil conditions improve while the spring head itself would remain protected indefinitely. Materials needed for the riparian enclosure include but are not limited to 2-point galvanized steel barbed wire, steel T-posts, wooden posts for H-braces (corner posts) and twisted smooth wire for securing H-braces. Materials needed for the off-site livestock water development include but are not limited to; a galvanized steel water trough (~100 gallon), spring box materials (pipe and/or 2" x 4" lumber), PVC pipe and flexible black pipe for plumbing needs as well as treated wood 4"x4" wood posts for supports for the trough. Tools needed to implement the project will be provided by the permittee and BLRD.

### 2. Coyote Spring Livestock Water Development

In order to improve livestock distribution and to meet the ultimate desired conditions (outlined by the USFS and RMA) it is necessary to protect and improve forage and vegetative and soil conditions in the Horseshoe Bend area of the Long Ridge Allotment

the Forest Service proposes to develop livestock water at Coyote Spring. A spring box would be placed in the spring channel to capture water to be plumbed to a trough for livestock access. Materials needed for the off-site livestock water development include but are not limited to; a galvanized steel water trough, spring box materials (pipe and/or 2" x 4" lumber), PVC pipe and flexible black pipe for plumbing needs as well as treated wood 4"x4" wood posts for supports for the trough. Tools needed to implement the project will be provided by the permittee and BLRD.

### 3. Smalley Cove Livestock Handling Facility and Livestock Water Development

To facilitate livestock handling and management in the Long Ridge Allotment, a pipe corral and holding pens would be reconstructed to standard - replacing the existing wooden corral that is in total disrepair at the Smalley Cove Pasture (adjacent to Kerckhoff Lake and Madera County Road 222). A spring box would be placed in the spring to the North of the corral to capture water to then be pumped to a trough for livestock access. By creating new holding pens and installing a spring-box cows/calf would be encouraged to make their way away from sensitive areas, reducing localized impacts, and into areas that are better suited to resist these impacts. Materials needed for the corral include but are not limited to; 2 7/8" inch pipe for top rail and center posts and succor rod for panels, gates and quickcrete. Additionally, a galvanized steel water trough (~235 gallon), spring box materials (pipe and/or 2" x 4" lumber), PVC pipe and flexible black pipe for plumbing needs as well as treated wood 4"x4" wood posts for supports for the trough. Tools needed to implement the project will be provided by the permittee and BLRD.

### 4. Powerhouse #4 Livestock Handling Facilities

To facilitate livestock handling and management in the Long Ridge Allotment, a 0.5 acre barbed-wire fenced holding field with a pipe corral and holding pens would be constructed to standard at the junction of the Southern California Edison Powerhouse #4 and Madera County Road 235 adjacent to the San Joaquin River above Kerckhoff Lake. This action, which may seem relatively simple, as an array of positive impacts for the rangeland and permittees alike. Materials needed for the corral include but are not limited to; 2 7/8" inch pipe for top rail and center posts and succor rod for panels, gates and quickcrete. Materials needed for the holding field include 2-point galvanized steel barbed wire, steel T-posts, wooden posts for H-braces (corner posts) and twisted smooth wire for securing H-braces.

Table 2. Summary of Project Scope for the LRARIP

Location	Description of Proposed Improvement	Associated Costs
Horseshoe Bend Trail	Construct Riparian Enclosure and Off-Site Livestock Water Development	\$4,300
Coyote Spring	Construct Off-Site Livestock Water Development	\$1,000
Smalley Cove	Construct Corral and Off-Site Livestock Water Development	\$5,000

Powerhouse #4	Construct Corral and Holding Field	\$4,000
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### **Project Summary**

The Long Ridge Allotments Improvements Project (LRARIP) is a joint effort between three parties (1) the United States Forest Service (USFS), Bass Lake Ranger District (BLRD) on the Sierra National Forest (SNF), (2) the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council (Y/S RC&DC) and the associated (3) Ranchers (permittees). This partnership between the National Forest, its permittees and the regional non-profit organization is unique in that it allows for; (1) access to specialist at a reduced rate, (2) the utilization of personnel that is extremely familiar with the associated areas and its specific historical and present day uses, (3) support from a diverse range of partners that it turn leverage the projects outcomes and sphere of influence, (4) maximizes the benefit analysis's outlined in the purposed budget and (5) provides and opportunity to utilize project results as a model for other like-projects across the region.

The LRARIP is designed to restore much needed elements within the Long Ridge Allotment that serves as a season grazing lands for two ranching families in the Sierra Nevada. Within the Long Ridge Allotment (6550 acres) four site-specific projects have been outlined in the areas of: (1) Horseshoe Bend Trail, (2) Coyote Spring, (3) Smalley Cove and (4) Powerhouse #4. The improvements to each of these areas result in (1) improved forage activity, (2) the preservation or riparian and other sensitive areas, (3) the distribution of cattle impacts and the (4) overall economic support (through efficiency and effectiveness) needed for the long-time ranchers utilize this rangeland.

The BSLD and the Y/S RC&DC have been partnering on natural resource and sustainable economic development projects for over a decade, if awarded a new project specific MOA will be created. The Y/S RC&DC will act as fiscal agent as well as complete article that reach out to the public about the good work being completed. The USFS, BLRD will implement the projects along with the permittees (associated ranchers) who would assist with the construction and implementation of these proposed rangeland improvements. NEPA for the project is complete (providing in-kind to the project) and was done under Categorical Exclusion, which is eligible for a NOE under section 15333, *Small Habitat Restoration Projects* and section 15304, *Minor Alterations to Land*. Funds for these types of range betterment activities are limited and there is a backlog of need materials and projects from which USFS funding allocations do not currently cover adequately.

### **Project Deliverables**

The site improvement project will entail the construction of a riparian enclosure, spring developments, corrals and a holding field all located within the Long Ridge Allotment of the Sierra National Forest in Madera County. The desired condition (outcome) for the project includes

- Construction of (1) riparian enclosure
- Development of (3) off-site water developments
- Construction of (2) corrals
- Construction of (1) holding field
- Improvements of 0.02 miles or 1156 linear feet of riparian habitat

- Improvements to forage, vegetation and soil conditions on an estimated **1,541** acres of primary use rangeland from improved livestock distribution and reduced impacts to riparian areas due to off-site water developments
- Increased efficiency and cost savings for ranchers (permittees) in managing/handling livestock
- Cooperative planning and implementation of a cost-share partnership between ranchers (permittees) and the Forest Service
- Provide a staging area in terms of Powerhouse #4 Corral (e.g. holding pens) for recreation stock utilizing the Proposed Horseshoe Bend Trailhead which is part of the San Joaquin River Trail.
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This proposal would result in overall improved livestock management, 0.02 miles of restored riparian habitat integrity and improved water quality and improved riparian habitat through implementation of water developments, fencing and livestock handling facilities which would specifically result in better livestock distribution across the allotment, limit localized impacts to riparian areas and result in improved forage, vegetation and soil conditions on an estimated 600 acres. In addition, this proposal would facilitate and improve livestock handling during gathering and round-up to ensure that stock are securely and safely handled, in an efficient manner that would minimize operating costs to the permittees and help to ensure viability of their ranching operations and their compliance with terms and conditions of their Term Grazing Permits (e.g. livestock gathered and off allotment at appropriate time and utilization standards met).

### **Environmental Setting**

The Long Ridge Allotment lies just north and east of Kerckhoff Lake on the San Joaquin River, about 5 miles south of the town of North Fork, California. Elevation varies from 1,000 feet to 2,400 feet. There are approximately 4,586 acres of National Forest system lands and 1,964 acres of private land within the Long Ridge allotment. Vegetation communities present within the project area consist of annual grasslands, blue oak woodlands, scattered gray pine, and Sierran chaparral. The project area has a Mediterranean climate with cool, moist winters and warm, dry summers. The annual precipitation is about 33 inches with most of the precipitation falling between November and April with isolated thunderstorms occurring in the summer months. All areas presently grazed are considered open grassland to scattered brushlands with a dense understory of annual forage species. The areas that are susceptible to cattle disturbance are generally swales and also riparian areas, where more concentrated use occurs due to higher forage production, and higher organic and moisture content in the soils make them more sensitive to trampling. This allotment drains to the San Joaquin River via the Willow Creek and Big Sandy-Fine Gold HUC 6 watershed. Willow Creek flows into the San Joaquin River just downstream of Redinger Lake. There are approximately 21 miles of perennial streams and 257 miles of seasonally flowing streams in the allotment. A seasonal spring located along the Horse Shoe Bend Trail (UTM coordinates 11S 0279387; 4110907) showed signs of denudation and heavy use by livestock as a forage and resting area. Chiseling was also evident along the banks of the spring as well as the channel that has developed below the spring. Recovery of the

vegetation in the reach immediately downstream of the spring would be facilitated by enclosing the spring and associated drainage. The Horseshoe Bend Trail (Forest Trail 23E15) will provide access to pack in materials to both the Horseshoe Bend Trail Riparian Enclosure and Off-site Water Development and Coyote Spring Off-Site Livestock Water Development, since there is no vehicle access to these locations. A Forest Service Packer/Wrangler will be required to get project materials to these locations.

### Workplan and Schedule

Work completed will include the construction of: (1) riparian enclosure, (3) off-site water developments (where spring sources are plumbed to a trough), (2) corrals made of pipe and (1) barbed-wire holding field, all located within the Long Ridge Allotment of the Sierra National Forest in Madera County. Table 3 describes the schedule of work which will include:

- Development of (3) spring sources to provide off-riparian site livestock water;
- Construction of (2) pipe corrals including sorting pens and a chute;
- Construction of (1) riparian enclosure fence to protect and restore 0.02 miles of riparian habitat.

Table 3. Schedule of Deliverables

Task	Schedule	Deliverables	Resources	Organization
SNC Authorization	June 2013	Grant awarded	Admin	Y/S RC&D
Scheduling Year 1 Work	September, 2013	Schedule of work developed	Range manager and permittees	Permittees/USFS
Procure and Deliver (P&D) Materials for HBT* Riparian Enclosure and OSLWD**	October, 2013	Order materials and deliver to site	Admin and Range manager	Y/S RC&D/USFS
Begin HBT Riparian Enclosure and OSLWD	November, 2013	Enclosure fence and OSLWD constructed	Range manager and permittees	Permittees/USFS
SNC 6 Month Report	Dec 2013	Submit Report	Admin	Y/S RC&D
P&D Materials for Powerhouse #4 Corral and Holding Field	January, 2014	Order materials and deliver to site	Admin and Range manager	Y/S RC&D/USFS
Construct Powerhouse #4 Corral and Holding Field	February, 2014	Corral and holding field constructed	Range manager and permittees	Permittees/USFS
SNC 12 month progress report	June, 2014	Submit 12 month progress report	Admin	Y/S RC&D
Scheduling Year 2	September,	Schedule of work	Range manager	Permittees/USFS

Work	2014	developed	and permittees	
P&D Materials for Coyote Spring OSLWD	October, 2014	Order materials and deliver to site	Admin and Range manager	Y/S RC&D/USFS
Begin Coyote Spring OSLWD	November, 2014	OSLWD constructed	Range manager and permittees	Permittees/USFS
Scheduling Year 3 Work	September, 2013	Schedule of work developed	Range manager and permittees	Permittees/USFS
P&D Materials for Smalley Cove (SC) Corral and OSLWD	January, 2015	Order materials and deliver to site	Admin and Range manager	Y/S RC&D/USFS
Construct SC Corral and OSLWD	February, 2015	Corral and OSLWD constructed	Range manager and permittees	Permittees/USFS
<b>Final Report to SNC</b>	<b>December, 2015</b>	<b>Submit Final Report</b>	<b>Admin</b>	<b>Y/S RC&amp;D</b>

\*HBT = Horseshoe Bend Trail

\*\*OSLWD = Off-site livestock water development

### **Restrictions/Agreements**

No property restrictions apply. All project activity will occur on National Forest System Lands and be implemented by the U.S. Forest Service. Forest Service has Implied Federal Water Rights in addition to California State Riparian-Overlying Water Rights for all activities proposed under this project.

### **Regulatory Requirements and Permits**

Project activity will be implemented and managed by the U.S. Forest Service on National Forest System Lands. The projects qualify for Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and have a water quality waiver with the State of California, Regional Water Quality Control Board. Forest Service has Implied Federal Water Rights in addition to California State Riparian-Overlying Water Rights for all activities proposed under this project.

### **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**

This project qualifies for a CEQA NOE under Title 14 (15333), *Small Habitat Restoration Projects* because: (1) this project implements minor management practices to improve allotment condition and animal distribution and does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment; (2) the total disturbance footprint for all restoration activity will be less than five acres; (3) there would be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to section 15065; (4) there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that will be disturbed or removed; (5) no heavy equipment will be used in the project, and (6) the project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects. Giving the conditions we are

requesting the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to be the lead agency under CEQA. If any additional information is needed we would be more than happy to provide.

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

All NEPA for the project rangeland improvements has been completed by the U.S. Forest Service under Categorical Exclusion (FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (9)) and USDA Forest Service Environmental Assessment for the Castle Peak and Long Ridge Grazing Allotments (July, 2009), which is on file at the Bass Lake Ranger District. Relevant biological reports are included with this application. NEPA activities conducted provide approximately \$22,000 of in-kind to the project which is a conservative figuration.

### **Organizational Capacity**

This project will be a collaborative effort between the Y/S RC&DC, Permittees Gary and Tawny Pamplin, Jay TeVelde of Sequoia Ranch LLC and the USFS, BLRD on the SNF. The YSRCDC has extensive experience managing and administering grants and watershed programs and will act as fiscal agent while coordinating public outreach as needed. The USFS has the organizational and practical expertise to implement and monitor the rangeland improvement activities. Project implementation will be managed by a journey level range manager with 18 years of range management and permit administration experience in direct coordination and cooperation with long time permittees who are in good standing who have decades of extensive range improvement expertise particularly with welding, fence construction and spring developments.

### **Cooperation and Community Support**

For over ten years the Y/S RC&DC has always worked collaboratively with a variety of stakeholder groups. The Council consists of approximately 35 groups as well as a variety of other like-partners that have established Memorandum of Understandings. Partners include but are not limited to, Board of Supervisors, Tribal Governments, Fire Safe Councils, Resource Conservation Districts, Community Development Councils, Economic Development Councils, educational institutions and other environmental and community organizations throughout the counties of Madera, Mariposa, Fresno and Tulare. It is on behalf of the Council (and therefore those organizations listed above) that we are preparing this application.

The letters of support attached express the excitement about the project itself outlining specific benefits to the forest and ranchers alike but they also indicate support for the partnership between the USFS and the Y/S RC&DC. The partnership between the BLRD and the grazing permittees involved is long standing. There has been a good working relationship built between the BLRD range manager and these ranchers over a 12 year period that fosters mutual respect, cooperation and successful planning/implementation of projects including the completion of the analysis of the Long Ridge Allotment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and implementation of range improvement projects decided under this analysis. This

partnership will help assure that the work can be completed in a timely manner utilizing permittees' available expertise to keep costs down and increasing effectiveness of the overall project. The Y/S RC&DC has worked with the BLRD on a variety of projects throughout the last decade. If awarded, a new Memorandum of Agreement will be developed between the BLRD and the Y/S RC&DC specifying responsibilities and commitments related directly to this project. The core relationship for this project is between the BLRD and the Y/S RC&DC however, other partners and supporters will also serve as resources as needed.

Additionally it should be noted that the Y/S RC&D Council is a strong supporter of the Sierra Nevada Initiative and the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative. We believe that this project coincides with the goal and mission of these documents while also enhancing ranches and agricultural lands. The Y/S RC&D Council is an active member of the Sustainable Forest and Community Collaborative, the Dinkey Creek Collaborative and the Willow Creek Planning Collaborative. As supporters and participants of these collaborative groups we develop our projects, including the Long Ridge Allotment Rangeland Improvements Project, in such a way to support these collaborative groups' key principals and goals.

At this point in time the Long Ridge Allotment Rangeland Improvements Project has been highly supported and there is no known opposition to be noted.

**Letters of Support Attached:** North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, Foundation for Resource Conservation, Sierra Vista National Scenic Byway Association, Natural Resources Conservation Services, North Fork Community Development Council Picayune Rancheria of the Chuckchansi Indians, Sierra Resource Conservation District Central Sierra Watershed Committee, Coarsegold Resource Conservation District Chowchilla Red Top Resource Conservation District, San Joaquin Valley Leadership Forum, United States Forest Service, Bass Lake Ranger District, Gary Pamplin, Rancher and Sierra National Forest Permittee and John Vincent, Three Rivers Sequoia Ranch LLC, Ranch Manager for Sierra National Forest Permittee

### **Long Term Management and Sustainability**

All new construction of rangeland improvement work will be inspected by a USFS journey level range manager after completion and will become part of the permittees annual maintenance responsibility through a Term Grazing Permit Modification. Improvements are inspected annually prior to livestock turn-out by a USFS journey level range manager to ensure proper function and maintenance of these improvements. Any modifications or repairs to improvements that may be needed will be communicated by the USFS journey level range manager to the permittees prior to livestock turnout.

This proposal is consistent with the USFS policy to continue contributions to the economic and social well-being of people (ranchers) by providing opportunities for economic diversity and by promoting stability for communities (Sierra Nevada foothills) that depend on range resources for their livelihood.

In addition, the unique relationship between the BLRD and grazing permittees sustains open space and important wildlife habitat in the Sierra Nevada foothills. It should be noted that the acreage that makes up these privately owned ranches is an eligibility requirement to hold a USFS grazing permit. The continuation of this

relationship between this use of federal land and the preservation of open space on private land, which depends upon proper stewardship, is a big picture and long-term benefit of this project. Maintaining and improving rangeland on the SNF under this proposal will directly benefit the economic stability of the local community by sustaining the operations of long-time ranchers in the Sierra Nevada while also providing improved conditions in riparian areas.

### **Performance Measures**

#### **1. Linear Stream Bank Protected and Restored:**

Approximately 106 linear feet of riparian area along an un-named channel that flows into the San Joaquin River would be protected and restored under this proposal.

#### **2. Acres of Land Improved and Restored:**

Approximately 1,541 acres of primary use rangeland will be improved under this proposal.

**3. Number and Value of New, Improved or Preserved Economic Activities:** This project will benefit the local economy specifically by preserving the economic activities associated with the two family ranches that rely on the continued use and stewardship of National Forest System lands within the Long Ridge Allotment to sustain their year round cow/calf operations.

### **Budget Narrative**

The implementation of the project activities will be cost-effective because both the Ranchers and USFS have the expertise to construct rangeland improvement projects and much of the work will be as in-kind contributions including the project planning and labor. Furthermore the Y/S RC&DC has the organizational capacity needed to effectively manage the grant over a three year period. This project is shovel ready because of the extensive planning completed including coordination with specialists and the permittees and the completion of the NEPA analysis (see Budget Spreadsheet). It should be noted that more money has been put into this project than what is being requested. Much has been completed and with the contribution of SNC funds the project will be complete. The total in-kind match associated with this project to date is over 100%.