



3.0 Narrative Descriptions

3.1 Detailed Project Description

3.1.a Project Summary

Located within the Pine Creek Watershed on the border of northern Butte County and southeastern Tehama County, the Pine Creek Linkage Project (Project) will facilitate the acquisition of conservation easements on four (4) large, working ranches totaling approximately 13,848 acres. With 92% (12,768 of 13,848 acres) of the Project Area being contiguous, the Project will permanently protect vital habitat connectivity through a mosaic of habitats already providing essential migration habitat and critical deer winter forage. The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), a supporter and partner in the Project, has current telemetry data from GPS-marked deer that clearly demonstrates the importance of this watershed for linking critical winter range and summer range habitats of the East Tehama Deer Herd, once the largest migratory deer herd in California. In addition to the biological benefits, the Project supports voluntary, long-term private stewardship and encourages economically-viable working ranches for the benefit of both current residents and future generations.

As the Project is supported by DFG biologists in both Region 1 and 2 (please see attached letters of support), targeted funding for conservation easement acquisition will come from the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). A critical first step in securing these funds, however, is developing a Conceptual Area Protection Plan for DFG's review and approval. The DFG uses this internal planning tool to help guide the State's limited resources towards those lands most worthy of conservation and that have willing landowners only. As we now have letters of support from DFG biologists, we're confident a Conceptual Area Protection Plan would be approved and funding granted possibly as early as late next year. Funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) will allow the applicant to work with DFG in the development of such a plan. Another common barrier to land protection projects is the prohibitive cost of appraisals, which for large working ranches can be as much as \$9,500 or more. To clear this hurdle and accomplish the long-term goal of acquiring permanent conservation easements on the four subject properties, appraisal services for the four connecting properties is being requested as well.

Deliverables generated from the Project will include a DFG-approved and adopted Conceptual Area Protection Plan and four (4) appraisals. With the Conceptual Area Protection Plan and appraisals completed, NCRLT will formally seek funding from DFG and WCB post-Project to purchase conservation easements on the four (4) subject properties. When completed, the Project will facilitate the permanent protection of four (4) working ranches totaling 13,848 acres which currently sustain oak woodland,



grassland, migration corridors, critical deer winter range, water quality, and habitats for many sensitive species that rely solely or in part on this landscape. In addition, by maintaining watershed health and promoting groundwater recharge, the Project supports existing downstream uses such as recreation and irrigation. These expected outcomes are consistent with SNC's mission and meet several program goals including: 1) protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical and living resources; 2) aid in the preservation of working landscapes; and 3) protect and improve water and air quality.

3.1.b Project description including location, purpose, scope of work, and expected outcomes

Location

The Project Area is located east of State Highway 99 on the border of northern Butte County and southeastern Tehama County, approximately 2.87 air miles northeast of the City of Chico in the "Richardson Springs" and "Campbell Mound" USGS 7.5' Quadrangles.

Purpose

The purpose of the Project is to facilitate the acquisition, connection, and permanent protection of four (4) large, working ranches totaling approximately 13,848 acres within the Pine Creek Watershed by: 1) securing appraisals on the four subject properties, and 2) developing a Conceptual Area Protection Plan for approval and implementation by the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

The Applicant has been unsuccessful in securing conservation easement funding for one of the landowners (Rose Ranch) for the past three years. We now have an opportunity to qualify for state funds from the Wildlife Conservation Board to purchase conservation easements on the following ranches: Wurlitzer, Garner, Rose, and Wood. A prerequisite in securing these funds, however, is developing a Conceptual Area Protection Plan for DFG. The DFG uses this internal planning tool to help guide the state's limited resources towards those lands most worthy of conservation and that have willing landowners only. As we now have letters of support from DFG biologists, we're confident a Conceptual Area Protection Plan would be approved and CE acquisition funding granted possibly as early as late next year. Without pre-project funding from the SNC, however, the Project will not likely succeed due to unwillingness by the landowners to pay for appraisals.

Scope of Work

The following tasks will be undertaken to accomplish the Project's goals and expected outcomes below:



Task 1: Develop Conceptual Area Protection Plan for DFG approval and implementation.

1. Review existing regional Conceptual Area Protection Plans, specifically the Lassen Foothills Ecological Reserve
2. Work with DFG personnel to prepare a Project Conceptual Area Protection Plan using provided DFG template
3. Complete Project Conceptual Area Protection Plan and submit to DFG for review and approval

Task 2: Commission appraisals on four subject properties.

1. Negotiate draft Deeds of Conservation Easement with landowners
2. Commission appraisals on subject properties per SNC and WCB specifications
3. Complete appraisals per SNC and WCB specifications

Project completion is expected 12 months after funding is awarded. One-and-half (1.5) Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) are expected to carry out the scope of work.

Goals and Expected Outcomes

The development of a Conceptual Area Protection Plan is a critical first step in applying for State funds to conserve and protect the resource values mentioned above. With the Conceptual Area Protection Plan and appraisals completed, NCRLT will formally seek funding to purchase conservation easements on the four (4) subject properties through DFG and the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in 2013-14. Before it can be implemented, the Conceptual Area Protection Plan will be subjected to the standard process of review and acceptance by DFG.

When completed, the Project will facilitate the permanent protection of approximately 13,848 acres (12,768 contiguous) of oak woodland, rangelands, migration corridors, critical deer winter range, water quality, and habitats for many sensitive species that rely solely or in part on this landscape. In addition, voluntary, long-term private stewardship and economically-viable working ranches will be supported and encouraged for the benefit of both current residents and future generations. These expected outcomes are consistent with SNC's mission and meet several program goals including: 1) protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical and living resources; 2) aid in the preservation of working landscapes; and 3) protect and improve water and air quality.



3.1.c. Environmental Setting

The Project Area encompasses a portion of the western foothills of the southern Cascade Range within the Mill-Big Chico Creek Watershed (HUC 18020119). Existing on the border of northern Butte County and southeastern Tehama County, the majority of the Project Area exists between Pine and Rock creeks with topography varying from gently rolling and terraced to very steep. Sensitive habitats and species occurring within the Project Area include the following: Foothill Yellow-legged Frog, Northwestern Pond Turtle, California Beaked-rush (CNPS 1B), White-stemmed Clarkia (CNPS 1B), Mildred's Clarkia (CNPS 1B), winter forage for the Tehama Deer Herd, Valley-foothill Riparian habitat, and Hardwood-Conifer habitat types including Blue Oak Woodland.

Land use within the Project Area consists of cattle grazing, hunting and recreation (with no proposed changes). Adjacent properties experience much of the same land use as those within the Project Area. However, urbanization pressure exists to the east and south of the Project Area constituted by ranchette development in the town of Cohasset and the proposed Urban Permit Area within the draft Butte Habitat Conservation Plan (please see Project Location map and Acquisition map respectively).

Urban development immediately adjacent to the south of the Project Area consists of many lots sized as low as 1.5 acres that are currently zoned A-5 (Agricultural with 5-acre minimums), however, that current zoning is set to be down-zoned (per the Butte County Zoning Ordinance Final Draft) to VLDR-2.5 (Very Low Density Residential with one unit allowed per 2.5 acres). Immediately to the east of the Project Area, in the town of Cohasset, the urban development consists of many parcels as small as five (5) acres. These parcels are currently zoned as TM-5 (Timber Mountain with 5-acre minimum parcel sizes), however, they are going to be changed to FR-5 (Foothill Residential with 5-acre minimum parcel size) per the Butte County Zoning Ordinance Final Draft. This planned and actual development immediately adjacent to the Project Area demonstrates a risk of conversion to the Project Area if not permanently protected.

Per the Tehama County General Plan Update 2009-2029, the entire Project Area within Tehama County is zoned as Upland Agriculture. Consistent with the proposed Project, the general plan describes the Upland Agriculture zoning classification as being used to preserve lands capable of supporting grazing activities; provide for areas of intensive and extensive agriculturally-compatible uses; identify and conserve areas of important open space, recreation, scenic, and natural value; and to accommodate the use of land for compatible non-agricultural uses to include commercial recreation, hunting and fishing, resource protection and management and habitat management.

Per the Butte County Zoning Ordinance Final Draft (2012), which implements the goals and policies of the Butte County General Plan 2030, the entire portion of the Project



within Butte County is zoned as AG-160 (agriculture with 160-acre minimum parcels). The purpose of the agricultural zoning classification is to support, protect, and maintain a viable, long-term agricultural sector in Butte County with standards maintaining the vitality of the agricultural sector by retaining parcel sizes necessary to sustain viable agricultural operations, protecting agricultural practices and activities by minimizing land-use conflicts, and protecting agricultural resources by regulating land uses and development intensities in agricultural areas.

3.2 Workplan and Schedule

TASK	TERM
Negotiate terms and draft four (4) deeds of conservation easement with landowners	April 1 – June 30, 2013
Commission appraisals on subject properties meeting SNC and WCB guidelines and specifications	July 2013
Review existing regional CAPPs, specifically the Lassen Foothills Ecological Reserve	April 1 – May 30, 2013
Work with DFG personnel to prepare Project CAPP using provided DFG template	June 1 – July 30, 2013
Complete Project CAPP and submit to DFG for review and approval	August 2013
Complete appraisals per SNC and WCB specifications	October 2013
Submit deliverables (Project CAPP and completed appraisals) to SNC	November 2013
Report on all Performance Measures that are incorporated into the grant agreement in the Final Report, in accordance with the Detailed Performance Measures descriptions.	March 2014



3.3 Organizational Capacity

With four (4) full-time staff, two (2) contracted employees and two (2) interns, the applicant has the capacity to complete the project as proposed. The Northern California Regional Land Trust currently holds 21 conservation easements and owns one property in fee simple title that together permanently protects 15,100 acres of strategic agricultural land and wildlife habitat. From 2006 to 2011, we recorded eight conservation easements in Butte and Tehama counties permanently protecting 13,899 acres of prime farmland, critical vernal pool habitat, and blue oak woodland. We have experience completing similar projects, including the “Red Bank Project” located in western Tehama County that acquired conservation easements on two (2) adjacent ranches totaling over 7,000 acres and the Little Chico Creek Linkage Project involving three adjacent landowners totaling over 500 acres east of Chico.

Project partners to date include DFG biologists Eric Haney (Regions 1) and Henry Lomeli (Region 2) (please see attached letters of support), the four (4) landowners (please see willing seller letters) and WCB. With current DFG support, a Conceptual Area Protection Plan would likely be approved by DFG leading to conservation easement funding by the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). The California Rangeland Conservation Coalition also supports the Project, as approximately 6,611 acres of “important” (5,044 acres) and “critical” rangeland (1,567 acres) they’ve formally identified and mapped would be conserved as a result of the Project.

The applicant entered into another grant agreement with SNC, a.k.a., the Tuscan Headwaters Project, and performed in compliance with the agreement and exceeded stated performance criteria.

3.4 Cooperation and Community Support

Project partners to date include DFG biologists Eric Haney (Regions 1) and Henry Lomeli (Region 2) (please see attached letters of support), the four (4) landowners (please see willing seller letters) and WCB. The California Rangeland Conservation Coalition also supports the Project, as approximately 6,611 acres of “important” (5,044 acres) and “critical” rangeland (1,567 acres) they’ve formally identified and mapped would be conserved as a result of the Project. In addition to Project partners, the following agencies/organizations are expected to support the Project: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Western Rivers Conservancy, CSU, Chico Research Foundation, and the Sacramento River Preservation Trust.



3.5 Long Term Management and Sustainability

The development of a Conceptual Area Protection Plan is a critical first step in applying for State funds to acquire conservation easements on the subject properties. With the Conceptual Area Protection Plan and appraisals completed, the applicant will formally seek funding to purchase conservation easements on the four (4) subject properties through DFG and WCB in 2013-14, thus completing the ultimate goal of the project.

The DFG formally supports the effort by the applicant to develop the Pine Creek Conceptual Area Protection Plan, and Regions 1 (includes Tehama County) and 2 (includes Butte County) are currently working with the applicant to move this project forward in a collaborative effort.

3.6 Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Required/Proposed	Applicable to Project? (Yes, No)	Explanation
Number of people reached	Required	Yes	The Project would be highlighted as a keystone conservation project in our quarterly e-Newsletter that reaches approximately 1,843 people from both the environmental and agricultural communities. In addition and with the landowners permission, we would send press releases to the local media drawing public attention.



Dollar value of resources leveraged for the Sierra Nevada	Required	Yes	DFG staff time contributed to the Project is estimated to be 100 hrs. at a rate of \$50/hr. equaling \$5,000 in labor. Completion of the CAPP and appraisals would also trigger WCB staff time in reviewing the project estimated at another 100 hours at \$50/hr. totaling another \$5,000, for a total dollar value of leveraged resources of \$10,000.
Number and type of jobs created	Required	No	The Project will not specifically create new jobs.
Number of new, improved, or preserved economic activities	Required	No	The Project will not specifically create new economic activities, nor improve, or preserve them.
Number of collaboratively developed plans and assessments	Proposed	Yes	One (1) DFG Conceptual Area Protection Plan and four (4) real estate appraisals will be developed by this Project qualifying it for WCB conservation easement acquisition funding.
Percent of pre-project and planning efforts resulting in Project Implementation	Proposed	Yes	100% of implemented measures will move the Project from its initial stages of collaboration with DFG and landowners to on-the-ground CE acquisitions.



<p>Measureable changes in knowledge and behavior</p>	<p>Proposed</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Change in knowledge and behavior in Project landowners and their neighbors and peers through improving watershed management activities per the terms of the conservation easements.</p>
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3.7 Budget Narrative

The expected cost of the project is \$50,300, which includes \$38,000 for four appraisals estimated at \$9,500 ea., and \$13,200 in NCRLT labor, which includes 160 hrs. at a rate of \$60/hr. for Jamison Watts, NCRLT Executive Director, and 60 hrs. at a rate of \$45/hr. for a NCRLT GIS Technician (support for CAPP review and development as well as conservation easement mapping). There is no pending or any other expected funding for this project and no revenues will be utilized to benefit the project. However, as partners in the Project, DFG biologists reviewing the Conceptual Area Protection Plan are estimated to contribute a total of \$5,000 (100 hrs. at \$50/hr.) in in-kind support.



4.0 Supplemental and Supporting Documents

- 4.1 Detailed Budget Form
- 4.2 Cooperation and Community Support
 - 4.2.a Letters of Support
- 4.3 Long-Term Management and Sustainability
 - 4.3.a Long-Term Management Plan
- 4.4 Maps and Photos
 - 4.4.a Project Location Map
 - 4.4.b Parcel Map showing County Assessor's Parcel Number(s)
 - 4.4.c Topographic Map
 - 4.4.d Photos of the Project Site
- 4.5 Additional submission requirements
 - 4.5.a Willing Seller Letter/Letters of Intent