

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control,
River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

Applicant: USDA Forest Service, Sierra National Forest, High Sierra Ranger District

Project Title: Soaproot Restoration Project

Subregion: South

County: Fresno

SNC Funding: \$349,788.00

Total Project Cost: \$840,577.00

Application Number: 786

Final Score: 97

PROJECT SCOPE

A history of logging practices, grazing, and fire suppression characterize the conditions in the Soaproot Stewardship vicinity. The forest structure consists of dense, even-aged forests that are increasingly susceptible to severe wildfire, drought, insects, and disease. Severe storms and insect outbreaks in combination with fire suppression over the past century create a hazardous fuels situation, making high-severity fires more likely.

One of the goals of this project is to reduce hazardous fuels by treating the fuels through mechanical methods. Watershed restoration treatments, such as surface and ladder fuel reduction, are necessary to return the Project area to a landscape resilient to wildfire impacts. Vegetative treatments would reduce tree and brush density in several areas, reducing fuel loads and the risk of large, high intensity events. Maintaining vegetative conditions would be accomplished through future planned underburning and vegetative treatments.

The analysis area of the Soaproot Restoration Project Environmental Assessment was selected by the Dinkey Collaborative (a group of diverse stakeholders assembled to direct the planning approach for the project) to reduce hazardous fuels and restore ecological components within the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project (DLRP). The DLRP was developed under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), and includes 154,000 acres on national forest and adjacent private lands. A cross-disciplinary approach was used for the collaborative process to incorporate the various insights and perspectives of group members. Dinkey Collaborative members

discussed the Soaproot NEPA analysis area in several meetings and site visits, as either a full group or smaller subcommittee to work out the details of the proposed action for the Soaproot NEPA Environmental Assessment. The Dinkey Collaborative provided input and viewpoints during the development of alternatives to consider for the Soaproot NEPA analysis.

The Soaproot Stewardship Project is located in the Upper Big Creek subdrainage, one of the Sierra National Forest’s designated priority watersheds for restoration treatments. Big Creek, Summit Creek, and Providence Creek are the three main streams at risk from the negative effects of high intensity wildfires. Proposed treatments to reduce fire severity would protect these stream reaches from disturbance. Downstream from the Soaproot Stewardship is Pine Flat Reservoir. This major reservoir on the Kings River provides Valley farmers irrigation water and produces electricity. Should the project area experience a large, high-severity fire in its present condition, sedimentation from the area over time would reduce the amount of storage in Pine Flat Reservoir and the benefits resulting from this stored water. The project will reduce the chances of such an occurrence by reducing hazardous fuels and creating a more resilient forest in which fire can better play its naturally occurring role in ecological processes.

The proposed scope of work, designed to maintain the suitability of sensitive species habitat while remaining consistent with fuels and fire objectives, includes:

- **Biomass Thinning (262.3 acres):** Within the units prescribed for restoration and ladder fuel treatments, small trees (4 to 9.9 inches DBH) will be thinned to a spacing of 20 feet and the trees yarded to a central landing with mechanized equipment such as a feller buncher and rubber-tired skidder. Depending on economics this biomass material will either be removed off-site or burned. There are several units within plantations that will also have small trees thinned to a spacing of 20 feet to accelerate development of large trees and meet ecological restoration objectives.
- **Tractor (470.5 acres) and Grapple (305 acres) Pile Slash:** The fuel prescriptions involve the mechanical rearrangement of fuels created from harvesting activities, natural processes or dense brushy areas. After proposed vegetation treatments, dead and down woody material treatment will occur. Areas of dense, green brush will be tractor piled as a separate treatment. FS personnel will later burn piles. In watersheds where cumulative watershed effects (CWEs) are a concern, grapple piling is prescribed.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Biomass Thin and Pile at Landing on 262.3 acres (units 16, 21, 24, 25, 27, 43, 54, 67, 91, and 92) Contractor will sub-contract with logging operator to accomplish this work with an excavator equipped with cutting head. Biomass trees will either be removed from landing as fuelwood or burned at the landing.	June 1-September 1, 2014

Tractor pile slash on 470.5 acres (units 3, 8, 15, 16, 17, 21, 29, 30, 32, 37, 48, 54, 59, 78, 91, and 92). Contractor will sub-contract with logging operator to accomplish this work with a dozer equipped with brush rake.	June 1-October 1, 2014
Grapple pile slash on 305 acres (units 1, 2, 10, 12, 22, 26, 27, 28, 31, 51, 58, 63, 63A, 76, and 84). Contractor will sub-contract with local grapple pile operator to accomplish this work with an excavator equipped with grapple head. Down woody material will be piled following specifications in the stewardship contract.	June 1-September 15, 2014
Submit 6 Month Report to SNC	December 1, 2014
Submit SNC Final report	June 1, 2015
FINAL PAYMENT	August 1, 2015

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	\$349,788.00
Indirect**	\$0.00
Administrative***	\$0.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$349,788.00

* Direct: Direct costs are expenses necessary to acquire, construct, or to adapt property to a new or different use, or to improve property including land, buildings and equipment. The property/expense must have a useful life longer than one year.

** Indirect: Expenses involve ongoing operations, repair or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.

*** Administrative: Expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct and indirect costs.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Steven A. Brink, California Forestry Association
 - Patrick Emmert, Private landowner adjacent to project area
 - Tim Kroeker, Department of Fish and Wildlife
 - Kirby D. Molen, Registered Professional Forester #2313
 - Dinkey Forest Collaborative

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

1. Number and Diversity of People Reached
2. Number and Types of Jobs Created
3. Number and value of New, Improved or preserved Economic Activities
4. Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada
5. Acres of land Improved or Restored