

Caples Ecological Restoration Project

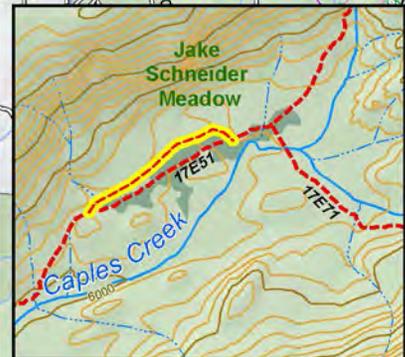
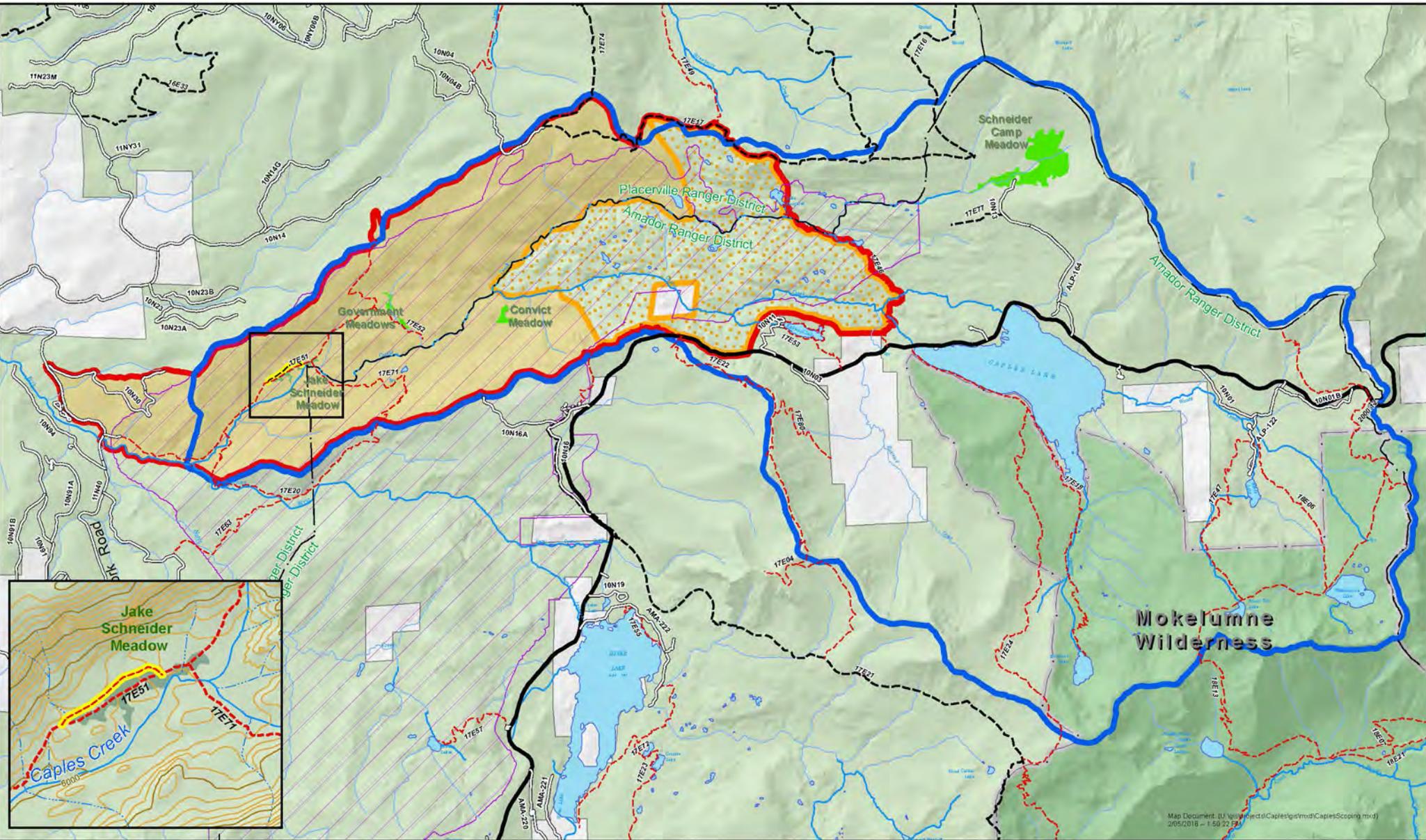
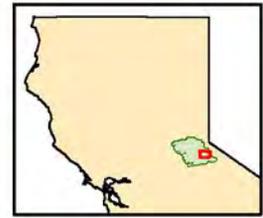
Amador and Placerville Ranger Districts

Eldorado National Forest



- Roads
- Motorized Trail
- - - Non-Motorized Trail
- - - Trail 17E51 ReRoute
- Ranger District Boundary
- Caples Creek Watershed
- Caples Creek Recommended Wilderness
- Prescribed Burn Area
- Vegetation Island Ignition
- Understory Burn
- USDA Forest Service
- NON-Forest Service

1:76,000



STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy Watershed Improvement Grant Program
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1)*

SNC ID Number: 853

Applicant: El Dorado Irrigation District

Project Title: Caples Creek Watershed Ecological
Restoration Project

SNC Subregion: Central

County: El Dorado

Funding Amount Requested: \$476,709

Funding Amount Recommended: \$476,709

Total Project Cost: \$1,065,757

Final Score: 88.0

PROJECT SCOPE / DESCRIPTION

The Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project is a Category 1 project that will utilize prescribed fire to improve forest conditions within a 20,236 acre watershed in the Eldorado National Forest (ENF). The grantee is the El Dorado Irrigation District (EID), working in partnership with the ENF. Caples Creek is located in the upper elevations of the western slope of El Dorado County, about 30 miles east of Placerville, and drains from just below Caples Lake into the South Fork of the American River.

This project will treat with prescribed fire forest lands that have become overly dense due to a century of fire suppression and lack of management. Elements of the work include: 1) laying and constructing 25 miles of perimeter fire control lines, utilizing existing trails and natural and human-made barriers as much as possible; 2) cutting, piling, and burning heavy accumulation of fuels to reduce the risk from the understory burning operations; 3) raking away the thick accumulations of duff from around selected old-growth trees so that roots will not be damaged from prolonged heat; 4) protection measures for cultural resource sites and 'at risk' historic sites and other infrastructure; and 5) approximately 4,400 acres of prescribed understory burning through handheld ignition over a period of several years. Work to prepare for burning will also include removing small encroaching conifers from 25 acres of interspersed aspen groves and meadows.

This work will comprehensively treat an entire watershed to improve forest health and water quality, and reduce wildfire risk. This is the first project of its type in the Region. The success of this project will potentially lead to similar treatments in adjacent areas. The SNC funded the development of NEPA and CEQA for this project.

El Dorado Irrigation District is a major water purveyor in El Dorado County. EID has successfully completed several SNC grant projects, including grant #564 which funded the development of the NEPA for this project. EID is applying on behalf of Eldorado National Forest; all work will be performed by the ENF with assistance from the California Conservation Corps and Local Conservation Corps where appropriate.

This project is a demonstration of how water purveyors can work with the US Forest Service (USFS) on fuels treatment and forest restoration on federal lands to improve water quality and increase available water quantity. SNC funding to El Dorado Irrigation District will leverage \$589,048 of Forest Service money to implement the entire project.

This project aligns with Proposition 1 goals and the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program by providing watershed-scale treatments to reduce wildfire risk and improve water quality and delivery through a partnership between a major water purveyor and the USFS. Caples Creek delivers a large amount of water to the South Fork American River which supplies domestic and agricultural water for a large portion of the county.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT TASKS / DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Construct 25 miles of fire line/trail improvements for fire containment	Feb. 2017 – Oct. 2019
Old growth tree raking	Feb. 2017 – Oct. 2019
Pre-burn preparation to protect historical infrastructure	Feb. 2017 – Oct. 2019
Cut and pile ladder fuels and heavy fuel accumulations along containment lines	Oct. 2017 – Oct. 2019
Understory/pile burning	Oct. 2017 – Nov. 2019
Aspen and meadow restoration	June 2017 – Sep. 2018
Aerial recon/understory burn monitoring	Oct. 2017 – Nov. 2019
Cultural resource monitoring	Feb. 2017 – Nov. 2019
Treatment effects monitoring	Oct. 2017 – Nov. 2019
Progress Reports	Every 6 months from execution of grant agreement
Estimated Project Completion Date - Final Report	December 31, 2019

PROJECT COSTS

BUDGET CATEGORIES	SNC FUNDING
Project Costs:	
Construction of fire line/trail improvements; cut/pile ladder fuels and heavy fuel accumulation; old growth tree raking; protection of historic structures	\$185,295
Understory/pile burning	\$134,440
Aspen and meadow restoration	\$57,300
Project materials and supplies	\$20,000
Fire line patrol and burn monitoring; treatment effects monitoring; reporting	\$79,674
Administrative:	
Administrative Costs	\$0
TOTAL:	\$476,709

PROJECT LETTERS OF SUPPORT / OPPOSITION

SUPPORT:

- El Dorado County Resource Conservation District
- El Dorado County Water agency
- El Dorado County Fire Safe Council
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California
- Sierra Forest Legacy
- California Sportfishing Protection Alliance

OPPOSITION:

- None

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to identify one to three project-specific Performance Measures in their application. Please note, Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified before the grant agreement is executed.

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Determination**Appendix D****To:**

Office of Planning and Research
 U.S. Mail: _____ Street Address: _____
 P.O. Box 3044 1400 Tenth St., Rm 113
 Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 Sacramento, CA 95814



County Clerk
 County of: _____
 Address: _____

From:

Public Agency: _____
 Address: Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603
 Contact: Patrick Eidman
 Phone: (530) 823-4689

Lead Agency (if different from above): _____

El Dorado Irrigation District
 Address: 2890 Mosquito Road
Placerville, CA 95667
 Contact: Dan Corcoran
 Phone: (530) 642-0482

SUBJECT: Filing of Notice of Determination in compliance with Section 21108 or 21152 of the Public Resources Code.

State Clearinghouse Number (if submitted to State Clearinghouse): 2016092044

Project Title: Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project

Project Applicant: El Dorado Irrigation District

Project Location (include county): El Dorado County and Amador County, CA; centered at 38°43'4.43"N, 120°7'41.77"W.

Project Description:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) would provide \$476,709 in funding to El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) to implement the Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project (proposed project). The proposed project involves prescribed fire activities on approximately 6,800 acres, and meadow restoration and aspen enhancement activities on approximately 25 acres in the Caples Creek watershed in the Eldorado National Forest. The proposed project would reintroduce fire as an ecosystem process to reduce fuel accumulation, reduce the risk of high intensity wildfire, and restore a diverse forest composition and structure over multiple years. Prescribed understory fires (both hand and aerial ignitions) within 25 miles of containment lines would be implemented under carefully monitored conditions favoring low to moderate intensity understory fires that would consume surface fuels, thin out small trees, and create openings with conditions favorable for shrubs and larger deciduous hardwood trees (aspen, oak, and cottonwood) contributing to a more diverse forest structure and composition. As part of restoration efforts in Jake Schneider Meadow, the proposed project would remove the competing conifers from aspen groves and reroute a hiking trail around the meadow. The project includes design criteria and best management practices adopted by the USFS for project activities to protect aquatic, terrestrial, and botanical special-status species, waterways and riparian areas, cultural resources, and aesthetic/visual resources. Impacts from smoke emissions would be minimized by complying with smoke management plans that will be approved by the El Dorado County Air Quality Management District. SNC has reviewed the Initial Study and negative declaration prepared by EID, and has independently determined that the Project would not result in significant adverse environmental impacts.

This is to advise that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has approved the above
 (Lead Agency or Responsible Agency)

described project on _____ and has made the following determinations regarding the above
 (date)
 described project.

1. The project **will not** have a significant effect on the environment
2. A Negative Declaration **was** prepared for this project pursuant to the provisions of CEQA
3. Mitigation measures **were not** a condition of the approval of the project.
4. A mitigation reporting or monitoring plan **was not** adopted for this project
5. A statement of Overriding Considerations **was not** adopted for this project.
6. Findings **were not** made pursuant to the provisions of CEQA.

This is to certify that the Negative Declaration and record of project approval is available to the General Public at:

Sierra Nevada Conservancy, 11521 Blocker Dr #205, Auburn, CA 95603

Signature (Public Agency): _____ Title: _____

Date: _____ Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

Authority cited: Sections 21083, Public Resources Code.
Reference Section 21000-21174, Public Resources Code.

Revised 2011