

Background

On October 29, 2015 Governor Brown issued an Emergency Proclamation ([Attachment A](#)) in response to the dramatic and extensive die-off of trees in the state. The proclamation references 22 million dead trees and forecasts tens of millions more to die, and identifies a broad range of actions to help mitigate the immediate threats to public health and safety, and the environment (current estimates are that as many as 58 million trees may be dead or dying statewide). The Governor established the Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF) to:

- Identify existing efforts to mitigate tree mortality in high hazard zones
- Identify an organizational structure and plan of action
- Establish working groups, as appropriate, to address various aspects identified in the Governor's State of Emergency proclamation
- Facilitate information flow between state, federal, tribal, and local governments, utilities, and other non-governmental organizations
- Ensure project activities and resources are coordinated
- Identify potential funding sources
- Coordinate with other state-level initiatives, such as the Forest Climate Action Team and California Biomass Working Group.
- Identify and evaluate the availability of wood products markets, and determine whether expanded wood products markets can be developed.
- Develop and maintain a website for the dissemination of information.
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/treetaskforce/>

Current Status

The Governor's Office is emphasizing the immediate need to take actions and has directed numerous activities by various state agencies to address the problem. The initial focus of the TMTF is the six counties that make up the southern Sierra Nevada (Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kern). The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) participates in each of eight working groups organized to develop specific actions referenced in the list above, and also has the opportunity and ability to respond rapidly to the call-to-action. Most of the activities or solutions being discussed in working groups are directly related to the ongoing work of the SNC and the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP).

The SNC Proposition 1 Grant Program is focused on supporting projects in the region specifically aligned with many of the activities being discussed in working groups. The SNC has authorized \$853,190 from its initial \$10 million allocation. An additional \$1.1 million is being recommended at this meeting and staff is actively reviewing applications representing an additional \$5-6 million dollars' worth of projects.

Given the severity of the problem, particularly in the southern Sierra, staff is recommending that the Board apportion \$1 million of the funds remaining from the \$10 million appropriation for grant awards to support efforts identified by TMTF working

groups and are also aligned with the existing SNC Grant Guidelines. This will allow the SNC to actively participate in the on-the-ground work that will be occurring in coming months to protect the public, communities, infrastructure, and the natural landscape.

Next Steps

If the staff recommendation is approved by the Board, Area staff will work directly with potential applicants to identify projects and ensure TMTF issues are addressed in project design and applications. All future grant recommendations that contribute to the TMTF will be brought to the Board for consideration consistent with existing guidelines and schedules, but will highlight this aspect.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board apportion up to \$1 million of the existing \$10 million available in the Proposition 1 Watershed Improvement Program to support projects that align with all existing requirements of the adopted Grant Guidelines and also achieve objectives of Governor Brown's Emergency Proclamation on Tree Mortality.