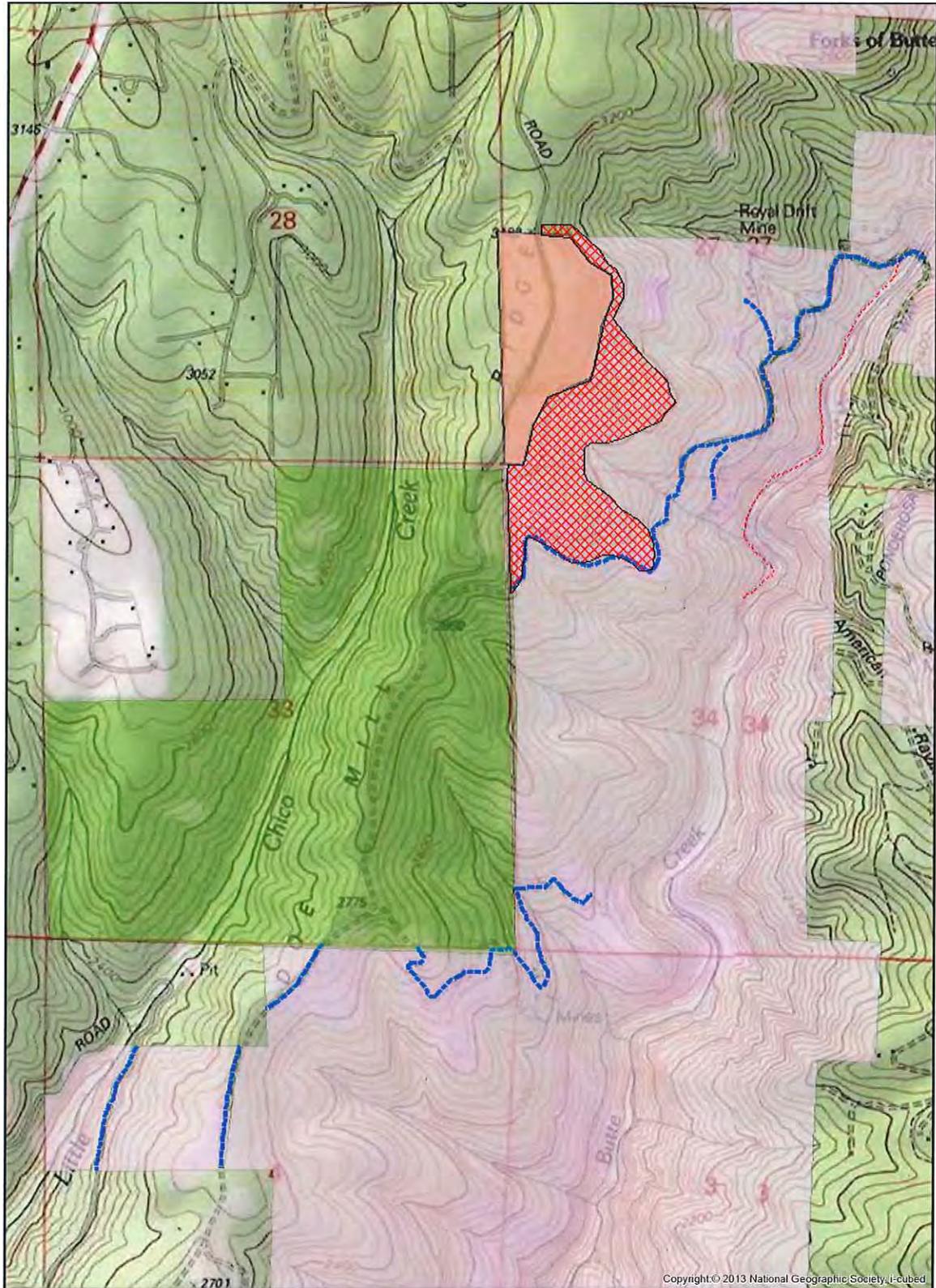




882
Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge
Watershed Project
Butte County
Upper Sacramento Watershed

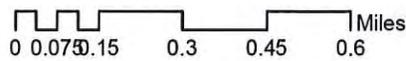


The Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project



Legend

- SPI 2015 Thinning
- Proposed Additional RxBurn Area
- Proposed RxBurn Area
- Trail Shaded Fuel Break
- Road Shaded Fuel Break
- BLM 2014a2 Holdings



**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

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

Applicant: Sacramento River Watershed Group

Project Title: Butte Forest Thin- Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Subregion: North Central

County: Butte

SNC Funding: \$494,697.00

Total Project Cost: \$685,547.00

Application Number: 882

Final Score: 86.75

PROJECT SCOPE

The sites are situated on Doe Mill Ridge between the Butte and Little Chico Creek watersheds, adjacent to the communities of Forest Ranch, Magalia, and Paradise in Butte County. Butte Creek (a significant perennial stream that supports spring runs of the threatened Chinook salmon and steelhead) transitions below into a complex system of water supply diversions that provides surface supply for downstream municipal and agriculture users. The slopes of the project area contain several springs and seeps which feed into Little Chico and Butte Creeks. This water contributes to the baseline flows and lower water temperature in the creeks and is critical to the long term survival of aquatic species.

The project will implement hand forest thinning to reduce fire ignition risk in heavily visited areas, followed with low intensity prescribed fire to treat a total of 227.5 acres of dense understory in mixed conifer forest. The land, administered by the Redding office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), will undergo pre- and post-project monitoring to examine how pre-fire fuel reduction treatments impact fire severity and improve forest health.

This project will reduce existing hazardous fuel loads, promote forest succession, and improve the overall quality and health of the remaining forest while providing a strong demonstration of the linkages between the landscape/management in upstream areas and impacts on downstream water availability and quality.

The project will serve as a pilot to educate resource partners and the public in the use of prescribed burns in order to garner support for a larger community watershed resiliency plan for Butte and Little Chico Creeks. Four other partner entities are contributing up to \$190,000 in in-kind activities and labor discounts.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Contracts prepared/awarded for hand thinning and piling (Scopes of Work)	Oct – Nov 2016
Hire crew(s)/partner with CCC	Nov – Dec 2016
Establish pre and post fixed monitoring plots to be visited at timed intervals (Monitoring protocols and implementation: report; photos and pre-established data points, analysis/ reports)	Oct 2016 – July 2018
Implementation - Roadside and Trails (pre and post photo documentation/site mapping/as-built mapping): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roadside and Trail thinning treatments/pile burns 2. Hand line construction for controlled burn and burn piles/roadside chipping/lop and scatter 	Nov 2016 – Feb 2018
Implementation – Prescribed Burn (pre and post photo documentation/site mapping/as-built mapping): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broadcast burn 124 acres 2. Mop up and patrol 	Nov 2016 – Feb 2018
Stakeholder/outreach meetings (quarterly)	Jan 2016 – May 2018
Six Month Progress Reports (3)	March 1, 2017 September 1, 2017 March 1, 2018
Final Report and Deliverables Due	July 1, 2018
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	July 1, 2018

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Direct*	
Project Management (project oversight, monitoring, reporting & invoicing)	\$59,640.00
Site Restoration Work/Contracts (crews/CCC)	\$400,000.00
Equipment/Materials	\$5,500.00
Outreach, Public Relations	\$6,000.00
Administrative**	\$23,557.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$494,697.00

* 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. Direct expenses should also include costs directly attributable to the project such as performance measure reporting, project management, billing, signs, etc.

** Administrative: Shared expenses associated with the administration of a project and may not exceed 15 percent of the total SNC grant request for direct costs. Examples of administrative costs include the costs of operating/maintaining facilities, general expenses, general administration, etc.

PROJECT LETTERS SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

- Support
 - Bureau of Land Management, Redding Field Office
 - California State University, Chico
 - Forest Ranch Fire Safe Council
 - Firestorm Wildland Fire Suppression, Inc.
 - CAL FIRE/Butte County Fire/Paradise Fire Department
 - California Indian Water Commission
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Butte County Board of Supervisors (2 letters)
 - Sierra Pacific Industries

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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

- Acres of Land Improved or Restored

Notice of Exemption

Form D

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 212
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Sierra Nevada Conservancy
11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205
Auburn, CA 95603

County Clerk
County of Butte
155 Nelson Avenue
Oroville, CA 95965-3411

(Address)

Project Title: Butte Forest Thin - Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Project Location - Specific:

The project is located in Butte County, California; centered at approximately 39°50'23"N and 121°38'40"W

Project Location - City: Two miles northwest of Magalia, CA Project Location - County: Butte

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding in the amount of \$494,697 to the Sacramento River Watershed Program for forest management and restoration activities with associated protective measures for wildlife and water quality on approximately 227.5 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, including forest thinning, follow-up low intensity prescribed burning, and pre- and post-monitoring activities. (See attached).

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Sacramento River Watershed Program

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project consists of minor alterations to the condition of land. The activities proposed by the project involve the thinning of trees and prescribed burning subject to approved plans and permits to facilitate forest succession and improve forest and watershed health. This forestry work would not result in significant adverse impacts to the environment and the project includes design features and measures to protect water quality and wildlife. As such, the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, which relates to minor alterations to land.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Patrick Eidman Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (530) 823-4689

If filed by applicant:

- 1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? Yes No

Signature: Date: Title:

- Signed by Lead Agency Date received for filing at OPR:
Signed by Applicant

Revised 2005

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION
CEQA Guidelines, Article 19, Section 15304

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Grant Application Number 882
Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project

Description of Activities

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy would provide funding in the amount of \$494,697 to the Sacramento River Watershed Program, a 501(c)(3) organization, to treat approximately 227.5 acres of forest to facilitate forest succession, improve forest health, and reduce fire hazard. Project activities include hand-thinning, broadcast burning, and pile burning forest treatments. The project would include thinning, piling, and construction of fire containment lines on approximately 42 acres. Broadcast burning would occur on the same 42 acres, plus an additional adjacent 82 acres that have already been thinned (total of 124 acres of broadcast burn), which were evaluated by the BLM as part of the Butte Forest Thin EA. The project would also involve thinning, lop and scatter, and pile burning of approximately 103.5 acres parallel to roads and trails, which were evaluated by the BLM as part of the Redding Field Office Developed Area Fuels Reduction EA. All project activities would be consistent with applicable plans and would include project design features intended to avoid adverse environmental impacts (see the Butte Forest Thin EA, EA number: DOI-BLM-CA-N060-2012-017; and Redding Field Office Developed Area Fuels Reduction EA, EA # DOI-BLM-CAN060-2012-055).

Thinning activities would involve removal of approximately 75% of small diameter (4"-7" dbh) and 60% of large diameter (8"-28' dbh) trees according to the following specifications:

- Healthy, vigorous dominant or co-dominant oaks and conifers would be the priority leave trees. Favorable leave species would be incense cedar, sugar pine, ponderosa pine, and black oak.
- Primary cut trees would be diseased, suppressed, and trees with low crown ratio or poor form. Primary cut species would be Douglas fir and tan oak.
- Uncommon species would be left
- Cut trees would be whole-tree yarded using tractor logging on slopes <40%
- Non-commercial material would be chipped and removed as biomass or piled and prescribe burned.
- Roads would be watered for dust suppression and graded for maintenance.

Broadcast and pile burning would be conducted in accordance with a smoke management plan and burn permit that would be obtained by the Bureau of Land Management from the Butte County Air Quality Management District.

Reasons Why the Project is Exempt

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a categorical exemption provides for an exemption from CEQA environmental documentation requirements for a class of projects determined not to have a significant effect on the environment. Categorical Exemptions are addressed in Article 19 of the CEQA Guidelines, where a list of 32 classes of projects has been identified. Projects falling within one of these classes of projects are generally exempt from the provisions of CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15304: Minor Alterations to Land

The Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15304, Class 4, which consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The minor land alterations proposed by the project involve the thinning and removal of trees to facilitate forest succession and improve forest and watershed health; the activities would result in reduced fire risk on approximately 227.5 acres, and the site forestry work will not result in significant adverse impacts.

No Exceptions to a Categorical Exemption

Categorical exemptions represent activities that generally do not result in significant environmental impacts. However, there are six exceptions to categorical exemptions, defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Generally, a categorical exemption does not apply if a project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments, would affect scenic resources within an official state scenic highway, or would be located on a designated hazardous waste site. In addition, a categorical exemption would not apply if the project causes substantial adverse changes in the significance of a historical resource or would be considered significant within the cumulative context. Table 1 identifies the exceptions from CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 and includes a brief rationale as to why each exception does not apply to the Butte Forest Thin – Doe Mill Ridge Watershed Project.

Table 1 Categorical Exemption Exceptions (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2)	
Exception	Applicability
(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.	The goals of this approximately 227.5-acre forestry project are to restore forest and watershed health, promote forest succession, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The project work consists of minor land alterations involving the thinning of commercial and non-commercial trees. The project work does not involve activities in or adjacent to streams or waterbodies, nor will project work occur on areas known to contain hazardous substances. The project activities will not occur in locations that contain known significant cultural or biological resources.
(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.	The forest management activities will not adversely affect environmental resources, and will therefore not contribute to any cumulative environmental impact in relation to other restoration projects in the region. The project will result in beneficial effects on the region's forests, creeks, watersheds, associated lands, and nearby neighborhoods by providing wildfire risk reduction, and natural resource management and protection. In addition, the project was evaluated in two separate Environmental Assessments prepared by the BLM Redding Field Office pursuant to NEPA. These analyses found that the project, in combination with other nearby forest management treatments, would not result in significant cumulative impacts.
(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.	The proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Specific environmental topics are addressed below: Aesthetics. The forest management treatments would result in a minor change in the

appearance of the forested areas near the community of Magalia due to the selective removal of trees. However, the project would maintain the project area as a conifer forest, and would have minimal long-term effects on the project area's visual character. All proposed management practices such as site preparation, thinning, and burning would be conducted with limited visibility or detection from surrounding properties. In addition, one of the project objectives is to prevent catastrophic wildfire, which could otherwise occur and result in aesthetic impacts.

Agriculture/ Forestry. The project site does not contain any grazing or agricultural resources; consequently, the project would have no impact on agricultural resources. The project would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on approximately 227.5 acres by thinning densely forested areas, thereby helping to protect these forest resources from catastrophic wildfire.

Air Quality/GHGs. The project activities would result in nominal fugitive dust, particulate, and mobile source emissions. Mobile source emissions would be limited to those associated with vehicle trips to/from the project sites, and use of mechanized equipment (e.g., chainsaws). Activities that emit fugitive dust and particulate matter (i.e., smoke) would be conducted in compliance with a smoke management plan and permit from the Butte County Air Quality Management District that will be obtained by the BLM, and which will include measures to minimize emissions. Nearby sensitive receptors would not be exposed to substantial pollutant concentrations. The project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the region's applicable air quality plan and would not violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or projected air quality violation.

Biological Resources. No sensitive biological resources would be affected by the project. Effects on biological resources were evaluated by the BLM in the Butte Forest Thin EA, and through a subsequent review of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB).

The project would have short-term impacts to Pacific fisher, migratory bird species, and bat

species with the potential to occur in the project area, but would ultimately have long-term benefits to these species. Project design features have been incorporated to protect and improve California spotted owl and Northern goshawk habitat, and these species would not be adversely affected by the project.

The EA and subsequent review of the CNDDB identified five special status plant species that could be affected by the project: Butte County morning glory, Butte County fritillary, Jepson's onion, dissected-leaved toothwort, and Mildred's clarkia. The project includes pre-project surveys by a BLM botanist, and the establishment of buffer zones to avoid effects on these species.

Cultural Resources. See (f).

Geology/Soils. The forestry activities would not expose people or structures to loss, injury, or death due to seismic activity or unstable soils. The work planned as part of the project would not occur in wetlands. Mechanical activities would be limited to a minimum of 50' away from seasonal drainages, and would not occur on slopes exceeding 40%. Temporary skid stream crossings would be completely rehabilitated and storm-proofed prior to the rainy season. Treatment activities would incorporate temporary erosion control measures and best management practices to minimize the potential for soil loss or erosion. Existing roads would be used to the extent possible to limit erosion and dust, and any new trails would be ripped and covered following treatments.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials. See (e).

Hydrology/Water Quality. See (a) and Geology/Soils.

Mineral Resources. Not applicable.

Noise. Forestry activities would generate temporary noise. However, given that project activities would be limited to daytime business hours (the least sensitive hours of the day), and the limited extent to which these activities could expose sensitive receptors to increased noise levels, the project would not cause significant noise effects.

	<p>Population/Housing. Not applicable.</p> <p>Public Services/Utilities. Not applicable.</p> <p>Recreation. Dispersed recreation activities would be restricted within the proposed units during timber harvests for safety. There would be no long-term effects to recreational uses in the treated areas.</p> <p>Transportation. There would be limited additional trips on local roadways during project implementation. No vehicular transportation over sensitive habitat would occur. Existing access roads would be used insofar as is possible. New trails would be completely reclaimed post-treatment. The vehicles would not block traffic and no traffic delays would occur due to restoration activities.</p> <p>Other CEQA Issues. As identified above, the project would have no effect on land use, hazards and hazardous materials, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, or utilities and service systems.</p>
<p>(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.</p>	<p>State Route (SR) 70, approximately 8.5 miles to the southeast of the project area, is eligible for designation as a scenic highway. The project area is not visible from SR 70 and the proposed project would not result in the removal of, or damage to, any trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings or other resources within the viewshed of a state scenic highway.</p>
<p>(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>	<p>The project is not located on a site which is included on a hazardous waste site contained on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.</p>
<p>(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.</p>	<p>No prehistoric or historic resources would be affected by the project. The area of the proposed project has been intensively surveyed for cultural resources. The project area was inventoried in 1975, with follow-up work by a BLM cultural resource specialist in 2012.</p> <p>Prior to project implementation a qualified BLM archeologist would flag known cultural resources. No work would occur in the vicinity of cultural resources, and project activities would be overseen by a BLM Archaeological Technician to avoid impacts to unknown or undiscovered cultural resources. If previously</p>

	undiscovered resources are encountered or suspected during project implementation, work would be halted immediately and would not resume until the area is cleared by qualified individuals.
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