STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

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

Applicant:	**LASSEN COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL, INC.**
Project Title:	**SOUTH ASH VALLEY WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT**
Subregion:	**NORTH**
County:	**LASSEN**
SNC Funding:	**$142,082.00**
Total Project Cost:	**$285,000.00**
Application Number:	**399**
Final Score:	**90.1**

PROJECT SCOPE

This project is being implemented by the Lassen County Fire Safe Council as part of their continuing work under the Lassen County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The goals of this plan specifically meet the SNC goals of forest health and watershed restoration. South Ash Valley is the headwaters of Ash Creek, a tributary to the Pit River Watershed System. Restoration activities include the removal of invasive western juniper on up to a total of 625 acres of range/forest lands. Biomass removed from the area will be utilized in the production of energy through local biomass energy facilities. Adaptive range management techniques will also be applied to ensure effective restoration of the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem, as identified in the Cooperative Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Initiative (CSSRI). Fuel loads will be reduced on the approximate 625 acres through mechanical removal of 98% juniper, 2% deformed, dying or overstocked Jeffrey pine within a wet meadow/sagebrush steppe system. SNC will pay a portion of the costs.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Progress Report	September 30, 2011
Contracted Juniper Removal	December 30, 2011
Final Performance Report	March 30, 2012
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	**June 30, 2012**

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Juniper Removal by Licensed Operator	$142,062.00
GRAND TOTAL	**$142,062.00**

PROJECT SUPPORT LETTERS

- Memorandum of Understanding among the USDA Forest Service, Modoc National Forest; United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Alturas Field Office; North Cal-Neva Resource and Development Council, Inc.; Counties of Lassen and Modoc, State of California; California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection/CalFIRE; and the Pit Resource Conservation District/Cooperative Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Initiative
- Susanville Indian Rancheria

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.

- Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created

PROJECT SUMMARY

County: **Lassen County, CA**

Applicant: **Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc.**

Project Title: **South Ash Valley Watershed Restoration Project**

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this project is to restore watershed functions (capture, storage of water in soil, and beneficial release) within a working landscape in the South Ash Valley Watershed at the headwaters of Ash Creek, a tributary to the Pit River, in Lassen County. This will be accomplished through the landscape scale removal of invasive western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) on at least 625 acres of wet meadow and sagebrush steppe habitat. This project specifically addresses the Proposition 84 goal of restoring watersheds and their associated land, water, and natural resources and will address several SNC programmatic goals by: restoring the Region's physical and living resources; aiding in the preservation of working landscapes; reducing the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires; improving water quality; and assisting the Regional economy.

PROJECT SCOPE

This project is being implemented by the Lassen County Fire Safe Council, Inc. (LCFSC) Cooperative Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Initiative (CSSRI), a partnership of local government, non-profit and tribal groups that have already restored more than 7,500 watershed acres over the past 6 years.

The primary restoration activities are the removal of invasive western juniper on at least 625 acres through biomass utilization and the implementation of adaptive range management techniques across a working landscape.

The proposed project will occur on approximately 1178 acres of private land in two adjacent parcels on the Ash Valley Ranch, approximately 20 miles southwest of Adin, CA in Lassen County. Approximately 625 acres of the two parcels will be treated.

Fire suppression and rangeland management practices over the last 150 years have resulted in the rapid expansion of western juniper into neighboring plant communities causing considerable concern because of: increased soil erosion; potential reduced stream flows; reduced forage production; altered wildlife habitat; changes in plant community composition, structure, and biodiversity; increased hazardous fuel loads and has resulted in the replacement of mesic and semi-arid plant communities with juniper woodlands (>10% tree canopy) (Miller et al. 2005).

The South Ash Valley area is a prime example of juniper encroachment into wet meadow and sagebrush steppe habitats. Significant benefits to wildlife habitat, rangeland health, and watershed functions will result from the treatments proposed in this plan.

Fuel loads will be reduced by mechanical methods on approximately 625 acres. Targeted fuel is approximately 98% juniper, 2% deformed, dying or overstocked Jeffrey pine in

need of thinning and a minor amount of decrepit mountain mahogany. All old growth junipers will be retained.

Fuel will be removed by shear and chainsaw. Part of the proposed treatment prescription involves minimizing the development of skid trails by attempting to skid across the entire landscape. This results in a treatment where there is maximum shrub and perennial grass retention and less soil compaction overall. Maximum retention of shrubs and grasses also results in less soil erosion.

After removal, most of the material will be chipped and hauled to an electrical power producing facility to be used as fuel. After the mechanical treatments are completed, hand crews will remove smaller junipers or other junipers that were not able to be cut mechanically.

The project is part of the larger CSSRI initiative that is currently implementing $1.4 million dollars of watershed restoration projects across Lassen County with funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contracts. The initiative's project management, project monitoring, and performance measure reporting needs are being funded with Title II Secure Rural Schools Act funds approved by the Lassen County Resource Advisory Committee, a sign of local and regional support. Currently a NRCS CCPI/EQIP contract and a USFWS PFW contract are restoring 300-400 acres within the area, so we hope that the SNC funds would complete the treatment.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

The CSSRI has established an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a wide variety of project partners in support of the overall goal of restoring native habitats through the removal of invasive western juniper (see attachment). The Susanville Indian Rancheria (SIR) and the Lassen County Board of Supervisors have provided letters of support.

SNC PROJECT DELIVERABLES AND SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Quarterly Performance Report	August 2011
Quarterly Performance Report	November 2011
Removal of juniper from at least 625 acres within the South Ash Valley watershed	December 2011
Final Performance Report	February 2012

SNC PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Contracts/Consultants – Mechanical/Hand Thinning Western Juniper Removal by a Licensed Timber Operator (LTO)	$250,000
SNC GRANT TOTAL	**$250,000**