



Staff Report

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Greg Jones, Assistant General Manager
Neysa King, Environmental Resources Administrator

DATE: February 9, 2022

SUBJECT: Sierra Nevada Conservancy Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resiliency Grant Proposal Authorization (Consent)

ADMINISTRATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution 2022-08 (Authorizing the Application for Grant Funds to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program for the Bear River Wildfire Recovery Project) and authorize the General Manager to execute the appropriate documents.

BACKGROUND:

Nevada Irrigation District proposes 250-acres of wildfire remediation and hazardous vegetation removal, post-fire reforestation and water supply protection within the 2021 River Fire burn scar, in the Bear River watershed.

Restoration project work will occur on District-owned property, adjacent to the Bear River, a key water supply watershed within Nevada County, California. NID proposes a combination of mastication and hand-crew treatment to remove and chip burned vegetation, hazardous tree removal and cleanup, herbicide application to reduce resprouting of hardwoods from cut stumps (spot application), and replanting of site appropriate conifer seedlings (Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir). Part of the fire fuels removal will extend beyond the burned area on the rim of the Bear River canyon to masticate ladder fuels to provide more defensible space adjacent to residential properties and communities for future wildfire response. Total project budget is \$1,012,700, and we request \$924,500 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for this important effort.

In 2021, NID spent over \$300,000 for Phase 1 response to treat the most critical issues. SNC grant funds will be used to complete the following activities:

- Mastication and/or hand-crew cutting and chipping of burned forest and ladder fuels on 180 acres;
- Cutting to pile or lop and scatter of burned trees in areas that cannot be masticated to reduce future wildfire risk and to reduce erosion potential within the burn scar, leaving selected trees as habitat;
- Application of herbicide to control regrowth of chaparral and fire prone brushy species as necessary (spot spraying as necessary on 250 acres);
- Replanting with conifer seedlings (approx. 200 seedlings/ac. on 180 acres);
- Installation of erosion control using straw bales and wattles on extremely steep slopes and within tributaries.

The River Fire was a declared wildfire emergency disaster. NID has assessed and quantified the immediate impacts of this 2,600-acre burn scar in the Bear River watershed on the 320 acres that are District-owned. The highest priority 80 acres were treated during 2021 as NID addressed areas to remove standing hazard trees, burned oak woodlands/chaparral, and soon will complete repairs to impacted water system infrastructure. Medium to long-term risks include interrupted water service to NID customers including DAC/SDAC communities, damaged infrastructure, hazardous watershed conditions and downstream impacts to the Bear River and associated water system facilities, including Combie Reservoir, associated hydropower infrastructure, and water treatment plants for communities in Nevada and Placer counties.

Water quality impacts are expected post-wildfire and NID is actively working to reduce the severity and duration of these impacts. NID is inherently dependent on healthy functioning watersheds, and the Bear River is part of NID's critical water system infrastructure, including water source, water transport and delivery, hydroelectric production, and water system infrastructure.

This project will reduce the short and long-term effects of wildfire on watershed health, water quality and habitats within the Bear River watershed by accelerating wildfire recovery. The project has been developed in consultation with a Registered Professional Forester, as well as site assessments completed by California Geologic Society, FEMA, CalOES, Nevada County Emergency Services, the Nevada County RCD, and NRCS. NID's consultant RPF will oversee site preparation and project implementation, and will ensure compliance with Forest Practice Rules, CEQA and State rules and regulations. Nevada Irrigation District staff will provide grant contracting, reporting, invoicing, technical and field support to achieve all aspects of the grant scope and contract requirements.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS

1. On August 4, 2021, the River Fire started near Colfax, California, and rapidly increased in size to threaten Nevada Irrigation District water supplies, facilities, property, and the public in general; and

2. Nevada County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 21-365 ratifying a local health emergency proclamation due to the immediate public health threat caused by hazardous waste and debris from the River Fire; and
3. On August 25, 2021 the NID Board adopted Resolution 2021-30: DECLARING AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE EXISTENCE OF AN EMERGENCY DUE TO THE RIVER FIRE AND AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO ENTER INTO NECESSARY CONTRACTS TO ACCESS, INSPECT, AND REPAIR DISTRICT PROPERTY AND FACILITIES, TO PROTECT DISTRICT WATER SUPPLIES, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF AGENCY EMPLOYEES AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL; and
4. A CAL FIRE Exemption has been received for this project and will satisfy CEQA for implementation.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Adopt Resolution No. 2022-08; or
2. Do not adopt Resolution No. 2022-08 and provide staff with direction.

CONCLUSION:

The attached resolution is a requirement of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant program which staff recommends adopting.

BUDGETARY IMPACT:

The 2022 adopted budget anticipated \$400,000 in consultant and contractor expenses for River Fire remediation activities, including \$100,000 in consultant RPF/biologist expenses (10116-52603) and an additional \$300,000 in River Fire contractor activities (10116-52615).

Attachments: (3)

- Resolution 2022-08
- Project map
- Project proposal photos



RESOLUTION NO. 2022-08

OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT

AUTHORIZING THE APPLICATION FOR GRANT FUNDS TO THE SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY'S WILDFIRE RECOVERY & FOREST RESILIENCE GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE BEAR RIVER WILDFIRE RECOVERY PROJECT

WHEREAS, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 the California State Budget appropriated \$50 million to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to address wildfire and forest resilience priorities; and

WHEREAS, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (the "SNC") has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of these funds through a grants program, establishing necessary procedures; and

WHEREAS, said procedures established by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy require a resolution certifying the approval of application(s) by the governing board of each applicant for said application(s) to the SNC; and

WHEREAS, the Nevada Irrigation District (the "District") has identified the Bear River Wildfire Recovery Project SNC Grant # 1400 (the "Project") as valuable toward meeting its mission and goals; and

WHEREAS, the Project is located on District owned properties adjacent to the Bear River within the burn area and immediately adjacent to this area on the canyon rim on approximately 250 acres; and

WHEREAS, the District will submit an application to SNC for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the District, if selected, will enter into an agreement with the SNC to carry out the Project; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of the Nevada Irrigation District that it does find as follows:

1. The above recitals are true and correct.
2. Approves the submittal of an application for the Bear River Wildfire Recovery Project SNC Grant # 1400.
3. Certifies that District understands the assurances and certification requirements in the application.
4. Certifies that District will have sufficient funds to operate and maintain the resource(s) consistent with the long-term benefits described in support of the application; or will secure the resources to do so.

5. Certifies that District will comply with all legal requirements as determined during the application process.
6. Appoints its General Manager, or designee, as agent to conduct all negotiations, execute and submit all documents, including but not limited to: applications, agreements, payment requests, and so on, which may be necessary for the completion of the aforementioned project(s).

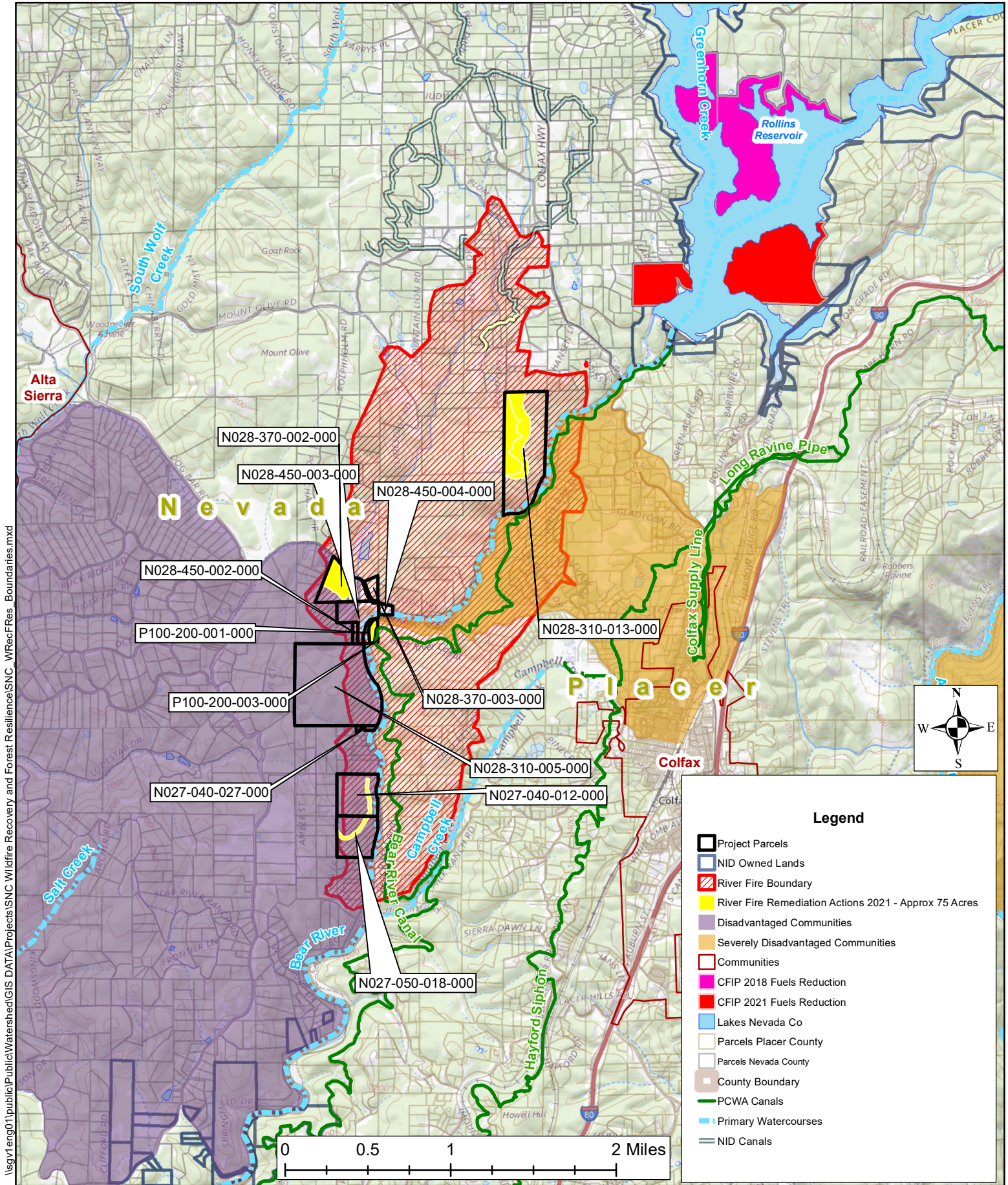
PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Nevada Irrigation District at a regular meeting held on the 9th day of February, 2022 by the following vote:

AYES:	Directors:
NOES:	Directors:
ABSENT:	Directors:
ABSTAINS:	Directors:

President of the Board of Directors

Attest:

Secretary to the Board of Directors



SNC Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Grant - Boundaries Map



Date: 1/12/2022
 Drawn By: C. TOWNSEND

NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT
 NEVADA COUNTY -- PLACER COUNTY
 GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Scale: 1:58,580
 Sheet: 2 of 3

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Bear River Wildfire Recovery Project
Project Site Photographs

SNC Project: 1400

Unit 1: Post wildfire damage showing treated and untreated forest community. Proposed treatments in Unit 1 will expand area of mastication and hand crew removal of burned vegetation. Stump spraying of herbicide will kill hardwood sprouts, and replanting with conifer seedlings will encourage post-wildfire forest recovery.



Unit 1: Post-wildfire conditions including burned montane hardwood mixed conifer community and elevated erosion rates. Project will include installation of erosion control structures made of straw bales, straw wattles, and strategically placed logs.







Unit 3: Fuel break constructed on either side of an existing access road during Phase 1 emergency remediation actions to remove large, burned hazard trees and provide a strategic wildfire response location. Proposed project will expand upon hazard tree removal, utilizing logs as erosion control, spraying stumps to kill hardwood sprouts, and revegetation with conifer seedlings to accelerate forest recovery.



Unit 3: Above the burn scar where District property meets private residential parcels in the WUI. Proposed project will utilize mastication to reduce hazardous fire fuels and stump spraying will strategically kill hardwood sprouts.

Photograph taken from Unit 2 looking southeast toward adjacent NID parcel in Placer County. Emergency erosion control and hazard tree removal was implemented in autumn 2021 to protect the Bear River Canal and Bear River from hazardous post-fire debris and sediment delivery into the Bear River. Proposed project will expand upon these efforts and include fuels reduction treatments and revegetation to promote forest recovery and protect the Bear River.



Unit 1: Aerial photo of Bear River Canal and Bear River adjacent to Unit 1. Proposed project will address burned forests on District property on the right of river in this photo to treat standing dead vegetation and promote forest recovery.

