

# Sierra Nevada Conservancy WIP Capacity Program Subgrant Three-Month Progress Report

**Grantee Name:** Eastern California Water Association

**Project title:** WIP Capacity Program Subgrant – East Geography

**SNC Grant Agreement Number:** 940-RFFCP

**Submittal Date:** August 6, 2021    **Reporting Period:** May 1 – July 31, 2021

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*Progress Reports are a required deliverable of your grant and must be completed whether or not work has occurred on your project in the last three months. Not submitting a complete progress report by the deadline defined in your grant agreement will result in any subsequent requests for payment being delayed or denied. Progress Reports should reflect implementation activities for the project over the last three months. Upon completion of the project, a Progress Report that covers the last three months of the project must accompany the Final Report.*

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## **Progress Report Summary**

Please provide a summary narrative of work completed during this reporting period in the following categories. This report should include work completed by any organization for which you are a fiscal agent or subgrantor under your SNC Subgrant.

1. Capacity Building
  - a. Capacity building need assessment

We submitted our capacity assessment on April 30, 2020.

- b. Capacity building program design

The capacity building program design will be updated and refreshed as needed.

- c. Capacity building program delivery

Plumas Corporation's Sierra Corps Fellow Kelsey Glastetter has stepped in to help with our Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance website after Chance's departure. She maintains the ESCCRP pages of the ESWA website anyway, and she offered to help with the overall website. This includes working with the Mono Basin and Independence Fire Safe Councils to develop and revise content for their pages. We very much appreciate her stepping in to help.

We were requested by the Independence Fire Safe Council to convene a meeting of all the region's fire safe councils to discuss drafting a letter to the federal land management agencies to request a tightening of fire restrictions, particularly around Eastern Sierra

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communities. We held a Zoom meeting in July, and six of the ten fire safe councils attended. It was agreed to start with a letter to county boards of supervisors. A first draft was produced by the Independence FSC, and it is now out for review among all the fire safe councils. It was also agreed that such regional coordination meetings would be useful to continue.

## 2. Collaboration and Partnership Development

### a. Stakeholder and partner outreach

Both Rick and Holly are leading different aspects of the ESCCRP needs assessment process. Rick is leading the monitoring and research group, and Holly is leading the education and outreach group. We are also participating in the biomass and workforce development groups, both of which will address critical constraints on any new fuels management projects in the region. Through these efforts, we have started working with new partners and formed new relationships.

In June, Rick participated in a three-day meeting and field trip concerning “traditional ecological knowledge” of Paiute, Washoe, and other tribes in the eastern Sierra Nevada.

We have been working more with the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District in trying to help them navigate the world of grants and project development.

Rick closely observed a prescribed burn in his immediate neighborhood that the Inyo National Forest had been planning for more than a decade. Informal discussions with fire management personnel during that burn illuminated many of the logistical difficulties and constraints that hamper prescribed fire activities. Rick had preliminary discussions with motivated residents of the Long Valley area of Mono County about forming a fire safe council.

Lastly, we have been working more closely with Inyo County’s Office of Emergency Services. The coordinator sits on the project prioritization subcommittee, and we communicate with her frequently about funding and coordination opportunities.

### b. Development of agreements (MOUs, MSA, GNAs, other agreements or foundational documents.)

No new agreements

### c. Meetings with partners/collaborative members

The following meetings occurred during the reporting period:

- Monthly projects subcommittee meetings to make progress on project prioritization criteria and process

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- Inyo County Board of Supervisors meeting to advocate for letter of support for CAL FIRE fire prevention grants
- Meetings of Alpine Biomass Collaborative, dispersed camping group, Eastern Sierra Council of Governments, Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership
- Rural County Representatives of California field trip in and around Mammoth Lakes
- One ESCCRP meeting, which we helped to host and facilitate
- Three meetings of ESCCRP outreach and education focal group
- Joint meeting with Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District, Town of Mammoth Lakes, Plumas Corporation
- Facilitated a coordination meeting among the region's fire safe councils
- Two meetings with two Mono County Supervisors to discuss CFSC's county coordinator grant program
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge "summit" organized by the Bi-State Tribal Natural Resources Committee
- Several meetings with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Inyo National Forest about funding opportunities resulting from the partnership with Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Because of the convoluted nature of the funding opportunity, we ultimately decided not to apply.
- One-on-one meetings:
  - CDFW
  - Janet Hatfield/ESCCRP planning
  - Mammoth FSC
  - 40 Acres FSC
  - Inyo County Office of Emergency Services

### d. Collaborative activities

Collaboration took place with the ESCCRP effort, both directly with Janet Hatfield and through the outreach and education and monitoring and research focal teams.

We collaborated with the region's fire safe councils in developing a letter to the boards of supervisors.

Many one-on-one discussions were held about potential future collaborations, particularly around the emergence of the Whitebark Institute as a grant applicant and project partner. Collaboration with the Inyo National Forest in this context is expanding.

### 3. Forest Health and Fire Protection Project Planning

#### a. Collecting existing plans and project information

We continue to hone the project database. Information about potential funding sources was added for many of the projects. Alpine County shared project information from its

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recently-completed wildfire hazard mitigation plan. The project database is a living document.

## b. Designing the planning process

Great Basin Institute continues its work on the standardized riparian environmental assessment. We have not received an update from them in quite some time.

No other progress was made on designing a planning process.

## c. Outreach and involvement of stakeholders and the public

The Whitebark Institute submitted five CAL FIRE fire prevention grants. Through these five applications, we worked with multiple stakeholders and potential project partners.

Fire safe council stakeholders participated in the initial coordination call.

## d. Application of scientific methodologies or best practices

N/A at this point.

## e. Project prioritization

American Forests is continuing to facilitate our project prioritization process. We held monthly meetings of the project prioritization subcommittee over the reporting period. We made significant progress on developing prioritization criteria through identifying issues of concern within various categories related to wildfire and ecosystem management. Fairly soon, the draft criteria will go to the full RFFCP stakeholder group for its input.

## f. Other planning activities

N/A at this point.

## 4. Forest Health and Fire Protection Project Development

### a. Completing design of projects

Some of our stakeholders and partners are completing the design of projects, but no projects that we are directly involved in.

### b. Obtaining funding for projects

The first part of the reporting period was consumed by the development and submittal of five CAL FIRE fire prevention grant applications, totaling \$2.83 million.

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We assisted in the design and coordination of a CAL FIRE Forest Health grant submitted by Inyo National Forest to implement early priority acres in the ESCCRP area.

We applied for a small California Fire Foundation grant to jump-start an education program focused on defensible space and home hardening.

Later in the reporting period, we became aware of a unique National Fish and Wildlife Foundation opportunity utilizing money from Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and intended for projects on the Inyo National Forest. After multiple discussions with INF, NFWF, and the Whitebark Institute board, it was decided that we would not apply for this funding because of capacity concerns and the convoluted nature of the funding structure. We believe that there may be the usual good lesson here for future funding endeavors – keep it simple!

- c. Completing environmental or other permitting for projects

N/A at this time.

- d. Other project development activities

Great Basin Institute's work is the primary project development activity currently underway.

## 5. Demonstration Project Implementation

- a. Project implementation activities

N/A

- b. Project evaluation activities

N/A

## 6. Subgrant Administration

- a. Project Reporting

The fifth quarterly report was submitted on May 5, 2021.

Invoice #6, covering the period April 1 – June 30, 2021, has been submitted.

- b. Administration and/or oversight of subgrants or fiscal agency recipients

ECWA is administering and overseeing this subgrant. ECWA does not oversee any

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other entities as related to this subgrant.

c. Other

N/A

## 7. Regional Communication and Collaboration

a. Communication or collaboration with other Geographies

Other than participating in the SNC-hosted subgrantee workshops, we did not have any communications with other geographies during the reporting period.

b. Participation in any multi-regional conferences, workshops, and webinars

The RFFCP east team participated in the SNC-hosted subgrantee workshops during the reporting period. We did not attend any other meetings with other geographies.

### **Status of Specific Deliverables to Date**

**In addition to the above, please report on any specific deliverables included in Exhibit A of your grant agreement.**

#### **Deliverable 1: Capacity assessment/capacity building work plan**

This deliverable was completed and submitted on April 30, 2020.

#### **Deliverable 2: Grant application for demonstration project**

A specific demonstration project has not yet been identified, but with the momentum being gained in the project prioritization process, along with the project development work being done by GBI, we expect a project opportunity to become apparent. We have begun to brainstorm some possibilities, such as a project to harden public buildings in the subregion to use for educational/demonstration purposes.

#### **Deliverable 3: Outreach/educational materials**

This deliverable is being fulfilled in a piecemeal fashion. We have already provided many educational materials about personal safety and evacuation, defensible space, and home hardening on our website and plan to expand that to prescribed fire. We are applying for a CAL FIRE fire prevention grant aimed at visitor education and outreach, through which a series of printed materials will be developed.

#### **Deliverable 4: Develop sub-regional plan**

The progress towards this deliverable is the project prioritization process that is now in place and progressing. While there will be no static end point of this process (meaning the project list will always be in flux, and thus the prioritization process too), it will yield a working list of prioritized projects that can be added to or subtracted from as needed.

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## **Challenges Encountered**

**Have you completed the 'Next Steps' work as stated in your last Progress Report? If not, please describe any issues that have made or will make completing the project on time difficult; include solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.**

We have made progress on the next steps from our previous progress report:

- The project prioritization process is moving along
- Our approach to funding opportunities has been opportunistic; because so few of the projects on our project list are shovel-ready, we have to come up with an implementable project when we find a desirable funding opportunity. If we can start getting some funding towards project planning, then we can be more deliberate in matching projects to funding opportunities.

At this time, our project is on schedule.

## **Successes Achieved**

**Please describe any successes or opportunities that have emerged during this reporting period.**

### **Successes**

- Submitting five CAL FIRE fire prevention grant applications and one CA Fire Foundation application; assisting with a CAL FIRE Forest Health application
- Convening the region's fire safe councils
- Significant process on developing project prioritization criteria
- Moving towards county-level fire coordinator grant applications

### **Opportunities**

- Offering more capacity building opportunities
- Keeping up on website maintenance and development
- Obtaining grant funding, particularly for project planning/development
- Begin drafting subregional plan
- More outreach

## **Media**

**Please provide a description along with copies or links of any coverage including social media posts, print, video, press release, or webpages.**

N/A at this time

## **Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs**

**Please refer to your grant agreement for the budget categories and budgeted costs.**

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These numbers are current as of June 30, 2021. That date is the end date of our sixth invoicing period.

<b>Project Budget Categories</b>	<b>Budgeted Subgrant Dollars</b>	<b>Total Expenditures to date</b>
Staff	\$145,000	\$106,386.19
Materials/Supplies	\$10,000	\$431.11
Travel	\$8,000	\$1,084.67
Indirect Costs	\$16,300	\$5,584.39
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$179,300</b>	<b>\$113,486.36</b>

**Please provide additional budget details as needed**

**Provide an explanation for any categories that are over budget. If you are on an advance payment schedule, list interest earned on advanced funds.**

We have gone over our capacity budget just slightly (\$10). We will not charge any more expenses to this category.

**Do you anticipate any challenges to completing the project within established budget category amounts?**

**If so, please list the budget categories in question and describe the potential issues.**

It is very unlikely we will use the entire budgets in the Materials/Supplies and Travel categories. Instead, it would be helpful to have additional money from these categories available for the Staff category.

**Next Steps**

**Work anticipated in the next three months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.**

It is anticipated that we will bring the draft project prioritization criteria to the stakeholder group in the next quarter.

Applying for funding opportunities as they become available.

The fire safe council letter will go before the boards of supervisors.

We will continue to assist in the ESCCRP effort, including leading focal teams.

At this time, no other events are scheduled.

**Comments**

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**Please list any other important items/issues pertaining to the project which have not been addressed elsewhere.**

N/A

## **Additional Requirements**

**If you have been requested to provide information on other issues (such as employment benefits, benefits to priority populations, greenhouse gas reductions, etc.), please provide the response below:**

We were requested to respond to the following prompts:

- What has worked well

Working with known stakeholders and developing relationships with new stakeholders has felt easy. We have been able to build trust and rapport quickly, and because of that, the RFFC Program is already being seen by many as the go-to resource for wildfire-related planning and support.

- What obstacles have emerged

The Sierra Corp Fellow program did not work for us. Both of our fellows had a host of work-related issues, and the amount of time spent by ECWA staff dealing with these issues meant time away from the grant work.

While we have developed some very nice relationships in the Inyo National Forest and will likely soon be working with them as a project partner, their lack of staffing capacity is also an obstacle to some of our work (by no fault of existing staff members). For instance, staff members are often not available when needed, particularly to help meet a time-sensitive deadline.

- What you need to overcome these obstacles

We are fortunate that Plumas Corporation's Sierra Corps Fellow has stepped in to help with the ESWA website. Beyond that and some minimal GIS needs, letting Chance go did not leave a gap in our staffing. The best way to overcome the obstacle was to terminate the relationship.

We do not presume that there is an easy fix to the Forest Service's staffing issues and know that it is much larger than one Forest. We are doubtful that the new shared stewardship advisor will be able to contribute much to this issue. In the meantime, we will continue to be patient and work with them as much as we can.

- What great ideas have emerged for new high-benefit programs and activities

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We were pleased to implement the request to gather the region's fire safe councils and begin coordination. These folks are very motivated to do good for their communities and the region, and we think they will have a strong, beneficial voice with local, state, and federal leaders. They realize that if the region's fire safe councils act together, they can have greater influence.

The visitor outreach and education campaign that was the focus of one of the CAL FIRE fire prevention grant applications came directly from our original capacity assessment. If this is funded, it stands to have a significant positive impact on the wildfire risk in the Eastern Sierra.

We have begun to compile wildfire-mitigation approaches and ordinances at the county level throughout the Sierra Nevada to serve as positive examples for other jurisdictions. When a draft report is available, we will ask the other subregions for corrections and additions. This work may contribute to our county-coordinator funding application.