

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: April 30, 2020 **Reporting Period:** January 30 – April 30, 2020

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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.

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

The capacity building need assessment was the main focus of our work during this first quarter of the subgrant. The assessment primarily consisted of interviews with local and regional stakeholders, as well as talking with capacity building and technical assistance providers, to understand current and recent fire and ecosystem-related efforts, identify need, and discover opportunities for improving local capacity. We conducted 28 interviews with 31 agencies and organizations. This number does not include two conference calls with American Forests and Great Basin Institute to begin discussing opportunities for capacity building and technical assistance. Starting in mid-March, we began conducting interviews via conference call and Zoom because of the coronavirus pandemic. Because of changes in work schedules and responsibilities, we were not able to conduct all the interviews we had wanted, but we are still able to assess need and will be submitting our assessment report by April 30. We will continue to meet with stakeholders as we are developing the collaborative planning process.

- b. Capacity building program design

Planning for capacity building followed seamlessly from our stakeholder interviews. As we began learning about the need and finding common gaps in capacity, ideas around

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capacity building and project identification quickly emerged. With resources we are able to provide locally, as well as with help from American Forests and Great Basin Institute, we have developed a modest list of capacity building activities that will be presented in our April 30 assessment report and that we feel we can reasonably provide with the resources currently available.

What became apparent through the process of our interviews, however, was that there is perhaps as much need for capacity building as there is for project development and implementation, and our current scope of work and budget do not reflect that. Because we are still identifying possible capacity building activities, we would like to be able to expand the scope of our capacity building program as we proceed through the grant, and we would like to be able to alter the budget accordingly.

c. Capacity building program delivery

We have not yet begun delivery/implementation of our capacity building activities, but this is part of the planning and design of the program as described above.

2. Collaboration and Partnership Development

a. Stakeholder and partner outreach

Our outreach thus far has been related to conducting the capacity building need assessment. We feel we have established good connections with stakeholders through this process (and building on connections previously established through other processes, such as the IRWMP) that we will be able to call upon as we develop a collaborative stakeholder process.

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

N/A at this point.

c. Meetings with partners/collaborative members

Most meetings up to this point have been focused on assessing need. However, meetings with California Fire Safe Council, American Forests, and Great Basin Institute have focused more on capacity building and technical assistance. These conversations will continue in the next quarter. We have also been talking with the Sierra Institute about biomass issues in the Eastern Sierra.

d. Collaborative activities

N/A at this point.

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3. Forest Health and Fire Protection Project Planning

a. Collecting existing plans and project information

We have done quite a bit of collecting existing plans and project information as part of the capacity building need assessment. We asked each stakeholder what planning processes they have been a part of and what projects they had implemented or are currently implementing. As a result, we collected and briefly analyzed 20 planning documents, containing more than 5,400 pages of material, as a part of the April 30 assessment report.

b. Designing the planning process

Only minimal work has occurred here to this point. These conversations will become higher priority after April 30.

c. Outreach and involvement of stakeholders and the public

N/A at this point.

d. Application of scientific methodologies or best practices

N/A at this point.

e. Project prioritization

N/A at this point.

f. Other planning activities

We have been following the progress of the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership. We had intended to attend some of the stakeholder meetings this quarter, but they were cancelled due to the pandemic. Matt Driscoll will help keep us up to date on the ESSRP's activities, and we will begin to plan and partner with them as opportunity allows.

4. Forest Health and Fire Protection Project Development

a. Completing design of projects

N/A at this point.

b. Obtaining funding for projects

We have identified a funding opportunity for a project/program that was identified as a high priority by most stakeholders we interviewed – visitor education and outreach

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about fire management and ecosystem health in the Eastern Sierra. It is a CA Fire Safe Council Clearinghouse grant, and the grant period opens May 15, 2020. This grant may serve as a first opportunity for collaboration among Eastern Sierra stakeholders.

- c. Completing environmental or other permitting for projects

N/A

- d. Other project development activities

Based on our interviews, we have developed a list of potential projects, which we reference often as we discuss projects with technical assistance providers and others. We have not conducted any project development beyond developing the list, which will continue to grow as we learn more. We have also put together an extensive Excel workbook (a template of which was shared with us by the South Sierra subregion) with tabs containing information on stakeholder interviews, specific capacity needs, project ideas, and capacity building ideas. This document will be an ongoing repository and template to guide our future project development activities.

5. Demonstration Project Implementation

- a. Project implementation activities

N/A

- b. Project evaluation activities

N/A

6. Subgrant Administration

- a. Project Reporting

This report is the first quarterly report developed for this subgrant. A first invoice has been submitted for the period January 30 – March 31, 2020.

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

ECWA is administering and overseeing this subgrant. ECWA does not oversee any other entities as related to this subgrant.

- c. Other

N/A

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7. Regional Communication and Collaboration

a. Communication or collaboration with other Geographies

We had the opportunity to virtually interact with the other WIP/RFFCP geographies during the WIP Capacity Conference at the end of March. We were sorry to not get to meet other subgrantees in person. Beyond this conference, we have communicated minimally with the South geography but would like to interact with them more. In addition, Marlon Charneau regularly communicates and interacts with the other Sierra Corps fellows.

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

Participation in WIP CAPACON was the only multi-regional event during the quarter. We have attended other virtual meetings and webinars at which some of the other geographies were present, such as Forest Service Shared Stewardship webinars.

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.

The first deliverable in our grant agreement is our capacity building work plan, which will be nested within our capacity building assessment report to be submitted on April 30. However, we want to emphasize that we will not view this work plan to be complete or final; it is simply a first cut at capacity building activities we want to undertake.

No other deliverables, other than this progress report itself, are due at this time.

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.

As this is our first progress report, we do not yet have any 'Next Steps' to report on. Of course, the greatest challenge right now is the coronavirus pandemic and the stay-at-home order. As described above, the disruption due to the pandemic limited the interviews we could conduct (although thanks to Zoom, we were still able to do many of them). Overall, we are still on schedule, though we do not know yet how the pandemic will impact our ability to start our collaborative stakeholder process.

Successes Achieved

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

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We think that we have already achieved a number of successes in this initial reporting period:

- Conducting 28 interviews with 31 stakeholders
- Developing and strengthening relationships with stakeholders
- Forging ahead with the assessment process despite the pandemic
- Participating in discussions about biomass facilities
- Beginning to work with our technical assistance providers American Forests and Great Basin Institute
- Orientation and inclusion of our Sierra Corps fellow, Marlon Charneau, in all aspects of the grant work

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.

These numbers are current as of March 31, 2020. That date is the end date of our first invoicing period.

Project Budget Categories	Budgeted Subgrant Dollars	Total Expenditures to date
Staff	\$145,000	\$19,214.92
Materials/Supplies	\$10,000	\$14.00
Travel	\$8,000	\$836.91
Indirect Costs	\$16,300	\$5,227.15
GRAND TOTAL	\$179,300	\$25,293.97

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.

N/A

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.

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Given the need for capacity building activities, and the fact that we are more than halfway through the capacity building task budget, we are thinking it would be helpful to have more money available in this task by taking some from the Plan Development task. We would like to have a conversation with SNC staff about this idea.

Next Steps

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

Planning ahead is fraught with uncertainty right now because of the pandemic. Even if the stay-at-home order is lifted, the return to our normal routines will likely be phased and gradual. Thus, our initial ideas of convening in-person stakeholder meetings may have to be modified. After April 30, we will re-group and, based on what we know at that time, we will develop a plan for how to move forward. Regardless of the larger pandemic issues, however, we intend to start interacting with stakeholders in some type of grouping over the next three months. We are not able to give details at this point about when and where (likely virtually), but one idea is to use the CA Fire Safe Council Clearinghouse grant opportunity as a way to bring people together for an initial conversation about visitor education and outreach in the Eastern Sierra. Finally, we will continue to build and begin to implement our capacity building plan.

Comments

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:

N/A