

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Activity Costs

- **Federal Requested Share:** \$4,425,750.00
- **Applicant Cost Share:** \$1,480,000.00
- **Total Activity Cost:** \$5,905,750.00

Have the Cost Sharing Funds been secured? Yes

Activity Title/Name: Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project

Population: 98,764

Activity Location: Nevada County is situated on 978 square miles of diverse and rugged rural lands in the northern section of the Sierra Nevada Range and has a wide variety of natural vegetation due to the changes in elevation from 300 - 9,100 (msl.) These diverse vegetation types developed with periodic fire which influenced spatial arrangement, density, species composition, and function. Historically, Nevada County's ecosystems were kept healthy and in balance by a variety of natural disturbances, including fire. Over the last two centuries, this balance has been affected by human disturbance through fire exclusion and suppression. Due to changes in the natural ecosystem disturbance pattern, fire behavior now deviates severely from the historic fire regime. More importantly, altered fire regimes can destabilize ecosystems and landscapes, creating conditions favorable to unprecedented catastrophic wildfire disturbance events, and subsequent mudslides from soils destabilized from high intensity wildfire.

Nevada County's population of over 98,000 people resides in 53,080 housing structures (US Census v2014). Homes and community development are inter-mixed with high volumes of flammable hazardous fuels. The CAL FIRE Hazard Severity Zone map verifies 91% of Nevada County's Wildland-Urban Interface ranks High to Very High in terms of hazardous fuels conditions; the vast majority of the population, and homes, lie within at-risk wildfire hazard areas where the effects of wildfire would be devastating. Permitting natural fire cycles to return to the landscape within developed areas is a challenge as prescribed burns can easily spread out of control.

Wildfire fires are burning at higher intensities producing greater devastation with increased property losses and greater impacts to infrastructure. Nevada County has experienced this firsthand. On October 8, 2017 the Wind Complex fire broke out during Red Flag conditions. Extreme winds fanned the fire which created a fast-moving firestorm. In response to the fire, large areas were evacuated during the night to ensure public safety. Lake Wildwood was the most populated area to be evacuated which stressed road systems to maximum capacity. Traffic was backed up for many miles which increased frustration of evacuees and challenged First Responders. Two days after these fires started, Nevada County the fire was declared a Presidential Major Disaster, DR-4344. The 2017 California Fire Season was one of the worst fire seasons in California's history and served as a wakeup call for everyone that lives in High Fire danger areas. Fire incidents such as the Wind Complex indicate that dangerous and damaging fire conditions exist and will likely occur again in this region.

Fire knows no boundaries, which is why Nevada County is dedicated to a "Whole Community" approach and is working with the City of Grass Valley and the City of Nevada City to overcome our fire hazard issue. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project, which involves the aforementioned

entities, includes fuels reduction projects in four high priority communities within the regions Wildland Urban Interface. This multi-pronged, hazardous fuels reduction project will take place in densely populated and developed regions near ridges, hills and slopes where the risk for wildfire spread is the greatest. All activities will be completed in High Fire Severity regions in the Wildland Urban Interface, located within 2 miles of both residential and non-residential structures including public and commercial facilities. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project is adjacent to and intermingled with the built environment and provides protection to both life and development from future wildfires.

Describe the problem to be mitigated: Nevada County, located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, is increasingly vulnerable to calamitous wildfire. Nevada County's recently updated 2017 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan identified wildland fire as the single most significant natural hazard to the region. The plan deemed the probability of the future occurrence of wildland fire highly likely with the potential for catastrophic severity and magnitude spanning a widespread geographic extent.

The State of California as a whole is broadly recognized as one of the most fire-prone and consequently fire-adapted landscapes in the world. For centuries, fire has existed as an integral part of the ecological fabric of the landscape¹. However, the Gold Rush that spurred the settlement of California was also the catalyst for a new style of forest management which removed fire altogether. Over the past 150 years, California's population has increased by 6,000%, and paralleling this growth has been a systematic suppression and complete removal of fire to provide protection to people and property². The periodic low-burning fires that kept the wooded foothills and mountains of the state clear of understory and ladder fuels have not burned in tens of decades. Now, forests across the West are overgrown, choked with vegetation, and are loaded with abundant fuels which expose communities within the Wildland Urban Interface to uncharacteristically treacherous fires. The fire prone condition of this region is further exacerbated by the warming climate which has resulted in extended periods of drought. Years of prolonged drought have stressed millions of trees. This lack of hydration renders the pines incapable of producing sap and resin, ultimately unable to fend off fatal pests like bark beetles. Unprecedented levels of tree mortality mean forests of dead and dying Ponderosa pines stand as hazardous fuel, susceptible to ignition from a strike of lightning, fallen powerline, lawnmower spark, smoldering cigarette, or catalytic converter. However, wildfire not only threatens human life and property, but the unique and irreplaceable historical and cultural legacy of this county.

Nevada County is located in the heart of the gold country. Native American, pioneer, railroad and mining history can be explored throughout the region. The National Register of Historic Places, California Historical Landmarks, and California Points of Historical Interest inventory 66 historically significant landmarks such as bridges, museums, parks, libraries, and cultural centers. Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park, serves as a 3,000-acre display of the hydraulic mining technique used in the era of gold extraction, and the National Hotel stands as one of the oldest continuously operated hotels west of the Rocky Mountain Range. These are merely two examples of the historic heritage to which wildfire remains an ever-present danger. Hazardous fuels, accumulating in the Wildland Urban Interface, have the potential to burn hotter and wreak more havoc than historic fires. Unfortunately, catastrophic wildfire is not a lone threat; it is at the center of a pinwheel of hazards. When large swaths of forest burn, vast amounts of carbon are deposited into the atmosphere and impact air quality and create severe health hazards for local and regional residents. Additionally, 60% of California's developed water, for uses such as drinking and irrigation, originates in the Sierra Nevada. Healthy forests help stabilize the landscape by providing protection against flooding, landslides, and erosion. Communities who have

¹ http://frap.fire.ca.gov/data/assessment2003/Chapter3_Quality/wildfiretrends_1.pdf

² http://www.dof.ca.gov/Reports/Demographic_Reports/

experienced wildfires know that flooding often follows. Wildfire destabilizes soil in watersheds, which can result in flooding, erosion and in some cases the decreased capacity of critical facilities such as surface water storage reservoirs. Nevada County with its varied topography is susceptible to both fires and flooding.

The scale and frequency of wildfires have increased across the state and Nevada County has experienced proliferation of this crisis firsthand³. Traditionally, the fire season has lasted the duration of summer, but because of a complex of factors the threat of fires is now year-round⁴. Over the past five years, 387 vegetation fires have broken out in the Joint Operating Area which consists of fire agencies from the City of Grass Valley and City of Nevada City, as well as Nevada County Consolidated Fire.

Just last October, a Red Flag warning was issued indicating the highest alert for a possible increase in rapid, dramatic wildfire activity. Due to these high winds, a small fire erupted into a large-scale firestorm. The fire was named the Wind Complex, and included the Cascade, Laporte, Lobo, and McCourtney Fires. The Nevada County Fairgrounds served as the central hub for the almost 100 public safety agencies that fought this tri-county fire. In the middle of the night, fire personnel went on foot, door to door, to help evacuate thousands of residents who awoke to flames; in total, 5,289 people from the Lake Wildwood community evacuated as fires engulfed their neighborhood. In total, 2,740 homes were threatened during the Wind Complex. Tragically, four people lost their lives.

In addition to the Wind Complex, between 2016 and 2018, Nevada County has been scorched by multi-acre fires including the Auburn, Phoenix, Grizzly, Greenhorn, Pleasant, McCourtney, Lobo, Garden, Oak, and Wolf Fires⁵. In total, since 2014, 387 of vegetation fires are on record for being started within the City of Grass Valley, the City of Nevada City and within the jurisdiction of Nevada County Consolidated Fire District. During the driest and windiest days of the year, Nevada County residents are accustomed to hearing air attack planes and tankers overhead defending against new wildfire threats.

In February of 2018, the Little Hoover Commission released a report titled *Fire on the Mountain: Rethinking Forest Management in the Sierra Nevada*. The Commission is an independent state oversight agency. The bipartisan report indicates the catastrophe-scale fire danger in the State of California as well as in Nevada County. The report also stresses the need to oversee a transformation to more proactive forest management system. The Commission urges that the state must address the disposal of millions of dead trees, provide financial assistance to rural counties and homeowners for hazardous vegetation removal, as well as fund and develop a public education campaign about the importance of healthy forests in the Sierra Nevada. All of these items are addressed in the Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project. Additionally, the *2014 National Action Plan – An implementation Framework for the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy* was developed through a collaborative effort by federal, state, local, territorial/tribal governments, non-governmental partners, and public stakeholders. The plan provides a framework for implementation actions and the primary national goals in the plan are: 1) Restore and maintain landscapes 2) Provide Fire-adapted Communities and 3) Improve Wildfire response. Identified challenges found in this plan are: 1) managing vegetation and fuels, 2) protecting homes, communities, and other values at risk 3) managing human-caused ignitions and 4) safely, effectively, and efficiently responding to wildfire. To increase safety to human life, protect property and reduce fire suppression costs, we seek to implement the Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation

³[3] http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/incidents/incidents_statsevents

⁴[4] <https://www.mynevadacounty.com/DocumentCenter/View/19365/Nevada-County-LHMP-Update-Complete-PDF?bidId=>, p. 2-7 (34)

⁵[6] http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/incidents/incidents_cur_search_results?search=Nevada

Project which addresses the challenges and incorporates the actions outlined in the *National Action Plan*.

ALTERNATIVE #1 – NO ACTION: Providing no action is absolutely unacceptable as wildfire is the most significant natural disaster facing Nevada County. Last year, Nevada County suffered through 1 Presidential Disaster due to wildfire and was very fortunate that the wildfires did not create more damage as 91% of which are High and Very High fire severity zones within the Wildland Urban Interface. Due to the uptick in recent wildfire events in the past five years, it is highly unlikely the County of Nevada would escape the next three years without a major catastrophe unless immediate corrective action is taken. The County, in coordination with Nevada City and Grass Valley, has identified five high priority communities within the Wildland Urban Interface, where on red flag days; the smallest spark could ignite communities living within these high-risk areas and spread to the neighboring urban locales. Moreover, no action would result in the County of Nevada becoming insubordinate to FEMA, Statewide, and Community Plans by not addressing its identified highest risk, wildfire.

ALTERNATIVE #2: PROPOSED ACTION: The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project will reduce hazardous fuels in strategic multi-jurisdictional Wildland Urban Interfaces to prevent loss of life and safeguard critical facilities from wildfires. Wildfire and its suppression are dangerous and costly; it is the goal of the community to invest in best-practices, such as defensible space and fuels reduction, to reduce the risk of and prevent wildfire. This project is a collaborative effort by the County of Nevada, the City of Nevada City, the City of Grass Valley, the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, CAL FIRE, and the Nevada County Fire Safe Council. These goals shall be obtained through a multi-pronged approach which will focus on: 1) Firewise Community Certification, 2) Defensible Space Chipping Program 3) Access and Functional Needs Defensible Space Assistance, 4) Green Waste Disposal Program, and 5) Defensible Space Clearing for County Maintained Roadside.

The project will assist with the formation of ten additional Firewise Communities. Hazardous Fuels Reduction in Strategic Fuel Management Zones will be implemented in five priority locations in need of hazardous fuels reduction. These locations have been strategically selected because of their proximity to dense population centers, critical facilities, vital infrastructure, and topographic vulnerability. The Defensible Space Chipping Program provides drive-by chipping service for residents to incentivize hazardous fuel reductions around homes for effective defensible space and private road evacuation routes thus preventing losses to property, public health, economy and the environment. The Access & Functional Needs program will assist individuals are unable to meet the minimum requirements under the law for defensible space due to disabilities or income restrictions. The Green Waste Disposal Program provides an expedient method for disposing of hazardous vegetation which incentivizes the protection of property and public health. The Defensible Space Clearing for County Maintained Roadside Program has been developed by the County of Nevada Public Works Department to provide the public with safe, functional ingress / egress and prevent wildfire threats through vegetation management.

The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project mitigates Nevada County's most significant natural hazard, wildfires (pgs. 4-129 to 4-145). The project will implement aspects of 5 goals presented in the Mitigation Strategy of the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017 (pp. iv-v).

1. Minimize risk and vulnerability of Nevada County to natural hazards and protect lives and prevent losses to property, public health, economy, and the environment.
2. Increase community education and awareness of risk and vulnerability to hazards and promote participation and voluntary compliance to reduce hazard-related losses.

3. Improve communities' capabilities to prevent/mitigate hazard-related losses and to be prepared for, respond to, and recover from a disaster event.
4. Reduce fire severity and intensity in Nevada County.
5. Maintain FEMA eligibility for grant funding.

Essential elements of this project include: the formation of ten additional Firewise Communities, reduction of hazardous fuels, a defensible space chipping program, an access and functional needs program, a green waste disposal program, and increased outreach and education efforts. Objectives of goals, 1-5, which align with the Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project include: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.5, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, and Actions 2, 38, 39, 43, 44 (pp. vi & x).

ALTERNATIVE #3—SECOND ACTION ALTERNATIVE: Alternative to project associated in this grant included Roadside Vegetation Maintenance on 50 miles of Roadway. Roadside Maintenance refers to the clearance of regrowth vegetation (native and introduced) in order to maintain a road corridor or other established cleared or disturbed areas on road reserves. The primary goal of this action is to take reasonable steps to prevent or inhibit the outbreak of fire on roadsides and the spread of fire through roadsides. Broken catalytic converters and dragging tow chains are the most common causes of these roadside ignitions, aside from the wildfires caused by arson. High winds combined with dry weather are the warning signs for wildfires. This means that a faulty car part can cause enough heat to create a flame. Due to the a high concentration of population living within the Wildland Urban Interface High Fire Severity Zones near high traffic circulation areas, roadside vegetation management is a valuable program to be implemented in order to mitigate wildfires around Nevada County.

The Second Action Alternative was not chosen as it does not address all issues outlined in the Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project or the Mitigation Strategies proposed in the 2017 Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Moreover this program does not include public assistance programs. Additionally proposed action focuses on a whole community approach and involves communities with training components while the second action alternative would not address training the community.

State the mitigation goals and objectives of the project: The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project will reduce hazardous fuels in strategic multi-jurisdictional Wildland Urban Interfaces to prevent loss of life and safeguard critical facilities from wildfires. Wildfire and its suppression are dangerous and costly; it is the goal of the community to invest in best-practices, such as defensible space and fuels reduction, to reduce the risk of and prevent wildfire. This project is a coordinated, collaborative effort by the County of Nevada, the City of Nevada City, the City of Grass Valley, the Town of Truckee, the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, CAL FIRE, and the Nevada County Fire Safe Council.

Five priority locations in need of hazardous fuels reduction have been strategically selected because of their proximity to dense population centers, critical facilities, vital infrastructure, and topographic vulnerability. In Nevada County, there are several places where wildlands meet developed neighborhoods, cities with high home density, and valuable critical infrastructure. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project will support the reduction of hazardous fuels through a strategic, multi-pronged approach. This Regional, whole community approach, will involve County of Nevada departments, the cities of Grass Valley , Nevada City, Truckee, fire agencies, public and private land managers, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, and community service groups who are committed to implementing plans to consistently and efficiently meet mitigation goals to protect people and property.

The goals of this strategy are:

1. Reduce hazardous fuels and decrease the rate of wildfire spread to enhance public safety, as well as protect critical private and public infrastructure in High Fire Severity zones in the Wildland Urban Interface.
2. Elevate public awareness surrounding the benefits of preparing for catastrophic wildfire.
3. Incite action by landowners in specific high priority Wildland Urban Interfaces to treat their own property to meet California Resource Code 4291 guidelines for wildfire defensible space.

These goals shall be attained through a multi-pronged approach:

1. Firewise Community Certification:

The objective is to certify ten new Firewise Communities in the High Fire Severity Wildland Urban Interface to encourage property owners to take actions that minimize the rate of wildfire spread, and loss of life and homes due to wildfire. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project will foster a community-approach to addressing wildfire and prepare entire neighborhoods for a fire before it occurs. The Project will engage wildland fire staff from the Fire Safe Council, federal, state, and local agencies who provide a community with information about coexisting with wildfire, along with mitigation information tailored to that specific area. The community will assess its risk and create its own network of cooperating homeowners, agencies, and organizations. The community will identify and implement its own local solutions.

2. Defensible Space Chipping Program:

The objective of the defensible space chipping program is to provide drive-by chipping service for residents to incentivize hazardous fuels reductions around homes for effective defensible space. With limited opportunity to burn the material due to air quality restrictions and a near year-round fire season in California; landowners are left with few options other than transporting their green waste to the County transfer station. This drastically reduces the time available to conduct vegetation management activities. The goal of this program is to provide chipping services to treat acres around homes, evacuation routes, and (WUI). Providing a cost-share partnership utilizing landowners' in-kind labor or private funding to clear the hazardous fuels for defensible space with a drive-by chipping program service has proven to incite greater action to address the wildfire issue.

3. Access and Functional Needs Defensible Space Assistance:

The objective is to establish a partnership with Fire Safe Council to provide those who have access and functional needs, over the course of two fire seasons, defensible space clearing. These individuals are unable to meet the minimum requirements under the law for defensible space due to physical disability or income restricted.

4. Green Waste Disposal Program

The objective is to provide free roadside neighborhood vegetation collection sites to residents within the high priority Wildland Urban Interface regions to incentivize and motivate more hazardous fuels reduction. The time and cost to transport biomass to the regional transfer station is onerous. Providing free green waste disposal sites within these neighborhoods will reduce barriers to implementing defensible space.

5. Defensible Space Clearing for County Maintained Roadside

The objective is to maintain roadway over the course of two fire seasons in order to provide the public with safe, functional ingress / egress through defensible space clearing along the roadside. This will mitigate wildfire threats during evacuation. Proper roadside clearing also provides “speed bumps” to help slow the rate of spread, while also enabling a quick, effective fire suppression response through ingress for firefighting apparatus. Public roads were identified through County of Nevada Circulation Plan 2009, County of Nevada Emergency Access Route Study 2000, Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Regional Severity Zone Map and Regional Emergency Access Routes Map.

The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project mitigates Nevada County’s most significant natural hazard, wildfires. The project will implement aspects of 5 goals presented in the Mitigation Strategy of the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017 (pp. iv-v).

1. Minimize risk and vulnerability of Nevada County to natural hazards and protect lives and prevent losses to property, public health, economy, and the environment.
2. Increase community outreach, education, and awareness of risk and vulnerability to hazards and promote participation and voluntary compliance to reduce hazard-related losses
3. Improve communities’ capabilities to prevent/mitigate hazard-related losses and to be prepared for, respond to, and recover from a disaster event.
4. Reduce fire severity and intensity in Nevada County
5. Maintain FEMA eligibility for grant funding

The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project implements the strategies included in 5 goals of the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017. The objectives and actions which align with the project are: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.5, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, and Actions 2, 38, 39, 43, 44 (pp. vi & x).

Briefly describe the need for this activity: Consensus among planning efforts to address the danger of wildfire through defensible space and hazardous fuels reduction efforts are contained in the FEMA DMA 2000 Multi-Jurisdiction, Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (MJMHMP) for Nevada County, Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017, the CAL FIRE Nevada – Yuba – Placer Unit Fire Plan and the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County’s Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Vegetation management, and landowner assistance are stated priorities in each plan. Given the fact that private property owners in Nevada County are embedded in the risk of wildfire, there is a need for direct assistance to mitigate the hazard of fire. Property owners choosing to live in wildfire prone areas need education on the choices, decisions, and actions that contribute to the complex wildfire problem. Due to a high influx of retirees from urban and suburban areas of California, it is critical to create a culture of informed, engaged, and vigilant citizens. Our education efforts are ongoing as the threat of year-round wildfire has become the reality. We recognize that the decisions made by residents greatly impact the threat of wildfire, and are dedicated to supporting our community in wildfire mitigation activities.

To truly affect landscape change, individual property owners must understand their role in preventing wildfire. Through our Firewise Community programs and aggressive education campaigns we are encouraging landowners to adopt responsibility for fire prevention. We are motivating and supporting

communities to serve as fire-safe stewards and encouraging a return of fuels to historical natural levels. Through providing strategic hazardous fuels reduction assistance to landowners in high priority, at-risk Wildland Urban Interfaces, we are greatly reducing the rate at which a catastrophic and devastating fire could spread and the damage it could ultimately wreak on the region. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project will safeguard lives, private property, and critical facilities from future wildfires.

The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project is in alignment with the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017. Objectives of goals, 1-5, which align with the Project include: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.5, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, and Actions 2, 38, 39, 43, 44 (pp. vi & x). Essential elements of this project include: the formation of additional Firewise Communities, a defensible space chipping program, access and functional needs defensible space assistance, a green waste disposal program, and defensible space clearing for county maintained roadside. The project addresses the need to increase community outreach, education, and awareness of the grave risk of wildfire and vulnerability to hazards. An aim of the project is to promote participation and voluntary compliance to reduce hazard-related losses (pg. iv).

A statement of the effectiveness or level of protection: According to the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017, wildland fire is the most significant natural hazard. Virtually all of Nevada County is designated as a high or very high risk for wildfire. The MJMHMP identifies community assistance as a high priority in the projects they developed in the plan to address this hazard. The plan outlines two fuel management prescriptions – Defensible Space and Community Defensible Space. The Nevada County CWPP also identifies the need to engage communities to address the wildfire threat across the landscape.

The County of Nevada Community Fire Mitigation Program provides an ideal partnership to attain these goals and to create Fire Adapted Communities in collaboration with local fire, public entities and the whole community. Communities are highly motivated after experiencing the 2017 Wind Complex Fire, under Red Flag Warning conditions, to initiate fuels reductions. Providing defensible space and hazardous fuels reduction assistance and disposal methods for the material removed by hand-clearing understory ladder fuels, needle and leaf drop has proven to be highly effective. Due to the limited burn season over the past years of drought, the dry California Mediterranean climate and limited burn days for smoke dispersal, the options for disposing of vegetation are extremely limited. Our rural communities are forced to cut, load, cover, and transport hazardous vegetation up to 60 miles round trip to the regional transfer station if the Chipping and Green Waste Disposal programs are not available.

These projects are formulated from a whole community approach where varieties of programs are made available to residents working on their defensible space. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project will reduce fuels by providing convenient, localized methods for disposing of hazardous vegetation which allows more time for residents to focus on conducting the hand-clearing around their homes and roadways. Firewise Community volunteers provide individual home advisory visits to help residents understand the requirements and help develop on-site strategies for mitigation efforts. Offering direct landowner assistance programs provide the partnership to garner greater participation, and more cohesive treatments which will perform better under wildfire. This has been proven effective from surveys of those utilizing these services in the past 95% of residents in Nevada County using these services report that they did more work on their property because the services were available. Many residents comment, that due to health concerns, they will not burn material and contribute to poor air

quality. Others report their inability to transport material due to lack of equipment and their fear of burning in dry conditions, which may result in an escaped debris burn. With the extremely limited number of burn days available, even those who would like to burn cannot due to local air quality district restrictions.

The proposed conceptual design, the means of implementation and the basic dimensions of the project and project area: The project includes five high-priority at-risk Wildland Urban Interfaces which emphasis highly developed areas in high hazard zones. These regions include Sugar Loaf and the Champion Mine Road communities in Nevada City, as well as the Morgan Ranch, Idaho-Maryland/Loma Rica, and Bennet Street communities in Grass Valley. The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project addresses the wildfire hazard through wildfire prevention outreach and education, hazardous fuels reduction, and private landowner defensible space assistance programs. These programs will be implemented through a regional partnership with the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, Nevada County departments, as well as the cities of Nevada City, Grass Valley, and Town of Truckee.

Include Relationship to LHMP: According to the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017, wildland fire is the most significant natural hazard (pg. iii). The plan indicates that the geographic extent of wildfire would be extensive, spanning 50-100% of the planning area. The probability of future occurrences is highly likely, near 100% in the next year. The magnitude and severity of the fire would likely be catastrophic meaning more than 50% of property would be severely damaged, shutdown of facilities for more than 30 days is possible and the disaster could result in multiple deaths. The significance of the wildfire threat is high with a widespread potential impact zone.

The Regional Gold Country Wildfire Mitigation Project mitigates Nevada County's most significant natural hazard, wildfires (pgs. 4-129 to 4-145). The project will implement aspects of 5 goals presented in the Mitigation Strategy of the Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2017 (pp. iv-v).

1. Minimize risk and vulnerability of Nevada County to natural hazards and protect lives and prevent losses to property, public health, economy, and the environment.
2. Increase community outreach, education, and awareness of risk and vulnerability to hazards and promote participation and voluntary compliance to reduce hazard-related losses.
3. Improve communities' capabilities to prevent/mitigate hazard-related losses and to be prepared for, respond to, and recover from a disaster event
4. Reduce fire severity and intensity in Nevada County
5. Maintain FEMA eligibility for grant funding

Essential elements of this project include: the formation of ten additional Firewise Communities, a defensible space chipping program, an access and functional needs program for the County's most vulnerable, a green waste disposal program, and roadside defensible space. The project objectives and goals, 1-5, align with the 2017 Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and incorporate objectives: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.5, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, and Actions 2, 38, 39, 43, and 44.