



RESOLUTION No. 23-194

OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF NEVADA

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE NEVADA COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE USDA, UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE (USFS), PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION, FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT GRANT FOR THE PONDEROSA PHASE 1 MAINTENANCE PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$750,000 AND AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES TO EXECUTE ALL ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GRANT ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTY OF NEVADA

WHEREAS, the Office of Emergency Services is responsible for mitigating wildfire hazards in the County; and

WHEREAS, the County of Nevada has a severe and present danger of wildfire presenting a threat to public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Phase 1 Shaded Fuel Break Project was identified as a priority wildfire mitigation action by the CAL FIRE Nevada-Yuba-Placer Strategic Plan and the Nevada County Community Wildfire Protection Plan; and

WHEREAS, CAL FIRE funded the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Phase 1 Shaded Fuel Break Project, and this work was completed on March 15, 2022; and

WHEREAS, shaded fuel breaks must receive maintenance actions every two to three years or within five years all mitigation benefit is lost; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Emergency Services was directed to submit a FY23 Earmark Request (Congressionally Directed Spending) for maintenance of the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Phase 1 Shaded Fuel Break; and

WHEREAS, because this earmark request was approved the Office of Emergency Services has been instructed to submit a grant application to the USDA, United States Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Fire and Aviation Management, the administrating agency of these funds; and

WHEREAS, if awarded, acceptance of this grant will be brought to the Board of Supervisors for approval per County Policy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of Nevada County does hereby authorize the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services to submit a grant application to the USDA, United States Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Fire and Aviation Management, in the total amount of \$750,000 and authorizes the Director of Office Emergency Services, or their designee, to execute all additional documents required to fulfill the requirements of the grant application on behalf of the County of Nevada.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Nevada at a regular meeting of said Board, held on the 9th day of May, 2023, by the following vote of said Board:

Ayes: Supervisors Heidi Hall, Edward C. Scofield, Lisa Swarthout, Susan Hoek and Hardy Bullock.

Noes: None.

Absent: None.

Abstain: None.

ATTEST:

JULIE PATTERSON HUNTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: 

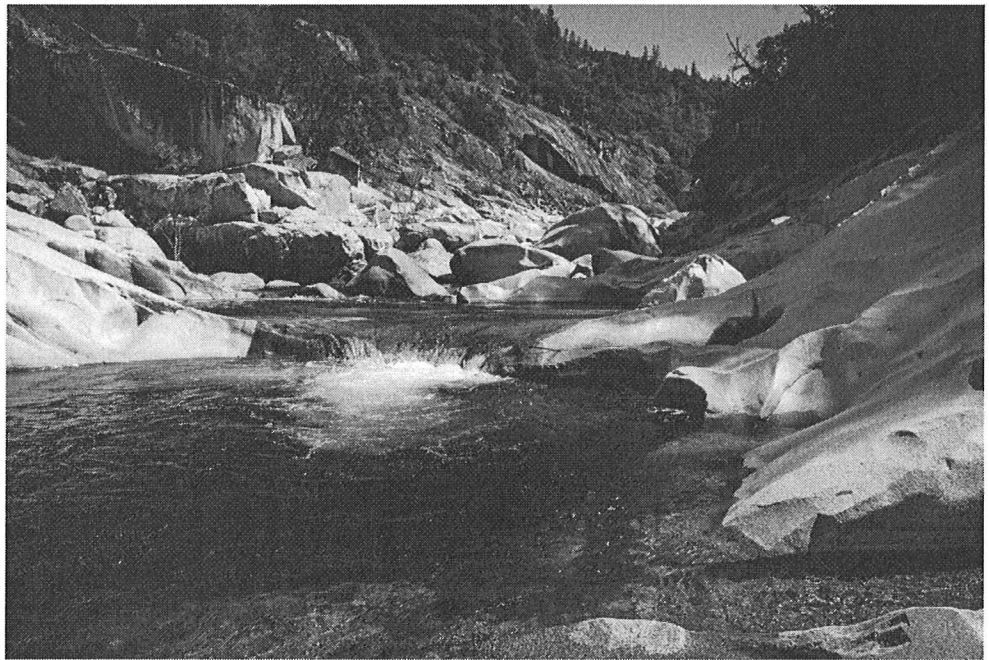

Edward C. Scofield, Chair

5/09/2023 cc: OES*

Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension		
Funding Breakdown		
Funding Source	Amount	Status
Ponderosa West Phase 2 FEMA HMGP	\$3,451,226	Pending
Cal OES PrepareCA Matching Funds	\$862,806	Pending
FY22 CDS Award for Ponderosa West Phase 2	\$750,000	Secured
County of Nevada's Local Match for FY22 CDS Award	\$750,000	Secured
FY23 CDS Request for Ponderosa West Phase 1 Second-Pass Implementation	\$750,000	Proposed
County of Nevada's Local Match for FY23 CDS Request	\$750,000	Committed
TOTAL	\$7,314,032	
Budget Breakdown		
Budget Category	Total Budget	FY23 Request
Salary and Wages (Project Management, Fire Safe Council)		
Salaries	\$394,226	\$40,425
Benefits (@23%)	\$117,756	\$12,075
Contractual		
Registered Professional Forester	\$60,000	\$7,500
Hazardous Vegetation Removal	\$5,644,946	\$615,000
CEQA/NEPA	\$292,561	\$0
Wildlife Biologist/Botanist	\$73,140	\$0
Indirect Costs 10% (de minimis rate)	\$731,403	\$75,000
TOTAL	\$7,314,032	\$750,000

Note that per USFS match is no longer required.

FY23 CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED FUNDING REQUEST



03.29.2022

Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension

Prepared by: Alex Keeble-Toll and Paul Cummings, Nevada County Office of
Emergency Services

FY23 CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED FUNDING Request

PONDEROSA WEST GRASS VALLEY DEFENSE ZONE EXTENSION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Despite increased investment in wildfire risk mitigation, 2021 marked the first time in recorded California history that a wildfire burned over the Sierra Crest – and this happened not once, but twice – with the Dixie and Caldor Fires. In total, the Dixie Fire burned for three months across five counties and nearly 1 million acres, destroying the entire rural town of Greenville and over 1,300 structures in the process. When the River Fire ignited in Nevada County on August 4, residents had been under the siege of smoke for an entire summer and catastrophe seemed inevitable. The River Fire incinerated 142 structures and 2,600 acres in nine days. This “close call” has been a brutal reminder that in the absence of aggressive wildfire risk mitigation actions it is not a question of “if” but rather “when” a megafire will strike Nevada County.

In 2019, Phase I of the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone was identified by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and California Governor Newsom as one of the State’s **highest priority** fuel reduction projects. This 1,200-acre shaded fuel break project wrapped up on March 15, 2022. The County now aims to leverage and extend the protections afforded by this project by maintaining and doubling the current treatment area. The proposed Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension Project would conduct second pass implementation on 1,200 acres and expand the treatment area by an additional 1,220-acres, anchoring the original defense zone project. The project will reduce catastrophic wildfire risk and promote forest health while creating safer public evacuation and wildfire suppression routes.

Hwy-20 bisects the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone area from east to west and in case of emergency would be a critical artery for evacuation from nearby communities including Grass Valley, Rough and Ready, Penn Valley, and Lake Wildwood. Within the 1.5 miles of the Project boundary there are more than 3,000 improved parcels in these communities and surrounding areas. Maintaining access to critical roadways in the vicinity would ensure that people would be able to safely evacuate, and that fire suppression equipment and personnel would have access to safely combat wildfire in the vicinity or other nearby populated areas.

Nevada County’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) classifies wildfire as having a HIGH probability of future occurrences in the County, which means there is a 100% chance of occurrence in next year, or it happens every year. The plan also designates the geographic extent of the threat of wildfire to be extensive; wildfire has the capacity to impact 50-100% of the planning area. The plan’s Hazard Identification Assessment concludes wildfire has a magnitude severity of Catastrophic. In other words, wildfire has the potential to result in more than 50% of property severely damaged, facilities being shut down for more than 30 days, as well as multiple deaths and injuries. Action must be taken now to prevent future loss.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

According to CAL FIRE’s Fire Hazard Severity Zone map, over 90% of Nevada County is living within the high or very high fire hazard severity zone. This Project leverages and extends millions of dollars in investment by state, federal, and local partners to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire by treating 2,420-acres in a high fire severity zone. At completion the project will provide protection to a thriving rural community of over 100,000 people in a County widely recognized for its historic Gold Rush significance and home to two of California’s 14 Cultural Districts. The Project has been identified by CAL FIRE’s Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit as a

FY23 CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED FUNDING Request

priority project in the 2021 Strategic Fire Plan, is the top priority project for Western Nevada County per the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and has broad-based community support - **but this work cannot be completed without federal support.**

PROJECT BUDGET

The total budget for this three-year project (4/2022-9/2025) is \$7,314,032 which represents funding strategically leveraged across state, federal, and local partners as follows:

1. County of Nevada currently has a proposal under review with FEMA (\$3,451,226; award timeline 6/2022-6/2025) which in combination with the required match provided by Cal OES PrepareCA Match (\$862,806) will provide the bulk of the funding for the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension Project.
2. For Project Year 1 the County has been approved for \$750,000 in FY22 Federal Earmark funds, which will be stacked against \$750,000 in local matching funds (a combination of general funds and PG&E settlement funds).

In combination, item 1 and item 2 will result in 1,200 acres of newly constructed shaded fuel break.

3. **This FY23 earmark request of \$750,000 is for Project Year 2**, which will be stacked against state matching funds in the amount of \$750,000 (proposed State funding from Sierra Nevada Conservancy Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program and/or CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grant Program; should State funding not be secured, the County is prepared to identify local match). The FY23 federal funds will be used to support second-pass implementation on 1,200 acres of shaded fuel break initially treated in 2019/2020.

PROJECT TIMELINE / READINESS

The duration of the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension Project is 36 months, with an anticipated start date of April 2022 and an anticipated end date of June 2025. To date, 1,666 acres of the total 2,420-acre project area are shovel ready; right of entry forms for the remaining 754 acres of privately-owned land will be collected upon award of FEMA funding.

We are requesting FY23 funds in the amount of \$750,000 which will be obligated to this project for use between the dates of 9/1/22-9/31/23. This Project will build on and extend the Ponderosa West Phase I Project that was funded by CAL FIRE (in the amount of \$3.5 million) and which wrapped up March 15, 2022. In total this project will construct 1,220 acres of new shaded fuel break and conduct second-pass treatment on 1,200 additional acres.

EVIDENCE OF LOCAL SUPPORT

Strategic Plans:

Nevada County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Nevada County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Community Letters of Support: Nine letters of Support for the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone.

Media Coverage:

Nevada County starts work on Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Project, The Union, Grass Valley, July 9, 2019

Ponderosa West, the Grass Valley Defense Zone Project, closer to reality, YubaNet, Nevada City, July 12, 2019

Work Begins on Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Shaded Fuel Break, YubaNet, Nevada City, August 21, 2019

Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Project ahead of schedule, setting ambitious pace for 2020, YubaNet, Nevada City, January 7, 2020

Ponderosa defense zone nearing completion: More shaded fuel breaks in the works, (PHOTO GALLERY), The Union, Grass Valley, October 1, 2020

In the zone: Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone nearly finished, more fuel abatement projects to follow, The Union, Grass Valley, April 15, 2021

Film:

The Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Project

Resolutions Pertaining to Support of Phase I of the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone:

1. Res No. 19-402: Resolution approving a contract between the County of Nevada and CAL FIRE for the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Project, in the amount of \$1,000,000, for the period July 9, 2019 through December 31, 2020, authorizing the Director of Emergency Services to execute the contract, and directing the Auditor-Controller to amend the Fiscal Year 2019/20 Office of Emergency Services budget. (4/5 affirmative vote required) (Districts III and IV)
2. Res No. 19-403: Resolution accepting a grant from CAL FIRE in the amount of \$2,536,477 for the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Project, for the period July 9, 2019 through March 15, 2022, and authorizing the Director of Emergency Services to execute Grant Agreement No. 5GG18114. (Emergency Services) (Districts III and IV)

JUSTIFICATION FOR FEDERAL SUPPORT

Federal investment is necessary to mitigate wildfire risk in strategic locations that are fundamental to protecting the safety and well-being of Nevada County residents. Neither the County nor the State have the resources to confront this problem head on without federal support. Every federal dollar invested in mitigation reduces the potential that federal dollars will need to be expended after the fact in disaster response and recovery – when the damage has already been done. Furthermore, as the federal government is the single

FY23 CONGRESSIONALLY DESIGNATED FUNDING Request

largest landowner in the region (the 1,300 square mile Tahoe National Forest is headquartered in Nevada County) every dollar invested in preventing catastrophic wildfire serves to protect federally managed forest resources. FY23 funds will be a key piece of a carefully crafted funding portfolio designed to mitigate wildfire risk in a location recognized by both experts and the community as strategically necessary.

PROJECT LEADS

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) is the County department that is project sponsor.

The County staff member acting as the project manager is Paul Cummings, Program Manager of the Office of Emergency Services.

PROJECT CHARTER

This project does not have a charter.

GRANTEE LEGAL NAME

Nevada County, Office of Emergency Services (OES)

PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

Name: Paul Cummings

Affiliation: Program Manager (OES)

Office phone: 530-265-7015

Out of office phone: 530-557-5153

Email: Paul.Cummings@co.nevada.ca.us

Senate-Specific Questions for Earmark Request Submittals

Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension

1. Project justification Required

(4 sentence, 150 word limit) A synopsis of the “Description” in order for the Senator to quickly understand the project – be concise but provide an adequate explanation. Summarize the necessary information about the project to make its case.

According to CAL FIRE’s Fire Hazard Severity Zone map, over 90% of Nevada County is living within the high or very high fire hazard severity zone. This Project leverages and extends millions of dollars in investment by state, federal, and local partners to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire by treating 2,420-acres in a high fire severity zone. At completion the project will provide protection to a thriving rural community of over 100,000 people in a County widely recognized for its historic Gold Rush significance and home to two of California’s 14 Cultural Districts. The Project has been identified by CAL FIRE’s Nevada-Yuba-Placer Unit as a priority project in the 2021 Strategic Fire Plan, is the top priority project for Western Nevada County per the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and has broad-based community support - **but this work cannot be completed without federal support.**

2. Description of the project Required

Provide a detailed description of the project, its history, impact, etc. Helpful questions to consider are: How is this project important to California or the local community? Why does it deserve federal funding? Whom does it serve? How many people does it serve? What is the minimum level of federal funding to move it forward?

Despite increased investment in wildfire risk mitigation, 2021 marked the first time in recorded California history that a wildfire burned over the Sierra Crest – and this happened not once, but twice – with the Dixie and Caldor Fires. In total, the Dixie Fire burned for three months across five counties and nearly 1 million acres, destroying the entire rural town of Greenville and over 1,300 structures in the process. When the River Fire ignited in Nevada County on August 4, residents had been under the siege of smoke for an entire summer and catastrophe seemed inevitable. The River Fire incinerated 142 structures and 2,600 acres in nine days. This “close call” has been a brutal reminder that in the absence of aggressive wildfire risk mitigation actions it is not a question of “if” but rather “when” a megafire will strike Nevada County.

In 2019, Phase I of the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone was identified by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and California Governor Newsom as one of the State’s **highest priority** fuel reduction projects. This 1,200-acre shaded fuel break project wrapped up on March 15, 2022. The County now aims to leverage and extend the protections afforded by this project by maintaining and doubling the current treatment area. The proposed Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension Project would conduct second pass implementation on 1,200 acres and expand the treatment area by an additional 1,220-acres, anchoring the original defense zone project. The project will reduce catastrophic wildfire risk and promote forest health while creating safer public evacuation and wildfire suppression routes.

Hwy-20 bisects the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone area from east to west and in case of emergency would be a critical artery for evacuation from nearby communities including Grass Valley, Rough and Ready, Penn Valley, and Lake Wildwood. Within the 1.5 miles of the Project boundary there are more than 3,000 improved parcels in these communities and surrounding areas. Maintaining access

Senate-Specific Questions for Earmark Request Submittals

Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension

to critical roadways in the vicinity would ensure that people would be able to safely evacuate, and that fire suppression equipment and personnel would have access to safely combat wildfire in the vicinity or other nearby populated areas.

Nevada County's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) classifies wildfire as having a HIGH probability of future occurrences in the County, which means there is a 100% chance of occurrence in next year, or it happens every year. The plan also designates the geographic extent of the threat of wildfire to be extensive; wildfire has the capacity to impact 50-100% of the planning area. The plan's Hazard Identification Assessment concludes wildfire has a magnitude severity of Catastrophic. In other words, wildfire has the potential to result in more than 50% of property severely damaged, facilities being shut down for more than 30 days, as well as multiple deaths and injuries. Action must be taken now to prevent future loss.

The minimum amount of FY23 federal funding that is necessary to move the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension Project forward is \$500,000. However, each dollar reduced that could have been dedicated to mitigation increases the likelihood that funds will need to be expended ten-fold for recovery in the wake of catastrophic wildfire that could have been prevented with critical fuels reduction activities.

3. Budget breakdown Required

This should include the project's total cost, non-federal sources of funding, etc. A detailed budget for the project should also break out the activities for which the requested funding will be utilized – what specific elements will be paid for with federal funding. If the request includes personnel, detail the number and types of positions and sources of funding for the positions in future years. If the request is for construction, specify the sources of cost estimates. Break out local, state, federal, private funding for the full cost of the project. Include the amount of non-federal match (dollar amount and/or percentage).

The total budget for this three-year project (4/2022-9/2025) is \$7,314,032 which represents funding strategically leveraged across state, federal, and local partners. State funding accounts for 22% (\$1,612,806) of the Project budget, Federal funding accounts for 68% (\$4,951,226), and Local funding accounts for 10% (\$750,000). Specific to the FY23 request, this Project has a 1:1 non-federal match.

Details on funding sources and amounts are as follows:

1. County of Nevada currently has a proposal under review with FEMA (\$3,451,226; award timeline 6/2022-6/2025) which in combination with the required match provided by Cal OES PrepareCA Match (\$862,806) will provide the bulk of the funding for the Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension Project.
2. For Project Year 1 the County has been approved for \$750,000 in FY22 Federal Earmark funds, which will be stacked against \$750,000 in local matching funds (a combination of general funds and PG&E settlement funds).

Senate-Specific Questions for Earmark Request Submittals Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Extension

In combination, item 1 and item 2 will result in 1,200 acres of newly constructed shaded fuel break.

3. **This FY23 earmark request of \$750,000 is for Project Year 2**, which will be stacked against state matching funds in the amount of \$750,000 (proposed State funding from Sierra Nevada Conservancy Forest and Watershed Health Grant Program and/or CAL FIRE Wildfire Prevention Grant Program; should State funding not be secured, the County is prepared to identify local match). The FY23 federal funds will be used to support second-pass implementation on 1,200 acres of shaded fuel break initially treated in 2019/2020.

The breakdown for this budget is as follows:

***Salaries and Benefits:** \$511,982 of which \$52,500 will be provided by the FY23 earmark.

**Positions are for Project Manager and Grant Manager; additional grant funding external to this project supports these positions beyond the Project timeframe.*

Contractual

Registered Professional Forester: \$60,000 of which \$7,500 will be provided by the FY23 earmark.

Hazardous Vegetation Removal: \$5,644,946 of which \$615,000 will be provided by the FY23 earmark.

CEQA/NEPA: \$292,561 of which \$0 will be provided by the FY23 earmark.

Wildlife Biologist/Botanist: \$73,140 of which \$0 will be provided by the FY23 earmark.

Indirect Costs 10% (de minimus rate): \$731,403 of which \$75,000 will be provided by the FY23 earmark.