



Fire Safe Council of Nevada County
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July 5, 2018

County of Nevada County
Executive Office
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959

RE: Forest Reserve Funds (Title III) Request for Fire Safe Council of Nevada County's Firewise Communities Program.

Amounts Requested:

\$23,500 for the 2018-19 fiscal year

\$23,500 for the 2019-20 fiscal year

Total funding = \$47,000

Agency/Organization Identification:

Name: Fire Safe Council of Nevada County (FSCNC)

Contact Person: Jamie Jones, Chief Operating Officer

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Project Title:

Firewise Communities Program

Project Description:

The FSCNC has developed and successfully delivered many fire prevention programs throughout Nevada County for the past nineteen years. The Council is proud of their success and actively seek funding to further their goal of establishing Firewise Communities. The risk of catastrophic wildfire in Nevada County is a real and ever-present hazard for residents and the natural environment including forests, watersheds, air quality, and wildlife habitat. Of the three required elements for wildfire to occur --- heat, oxygen, and fuel --- the fuel load hazard is the only element which can be proactively altered so as to reduce the wildfire hazard in Nevada County. According to the FEMA approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, the number one natural hazard in Nevada County is wildfires. The FSCNC is the ultimate delivery mechanism for wildfire education and prevention programs meeting the specified objectives of Forest Reserve Funds (Title III) to help reduce the risk of loss of lives, property, and natural resources from wildfire in Nevada County through the implementation of the nationally recognized Firewise Communities USA program.

The FSCNC is requesting funding for these efforts to retain the existing Firewise Community annual certification in the following Firewise Communities:

- Lake Wildwood HOA
- Lake of the Pines Association
- Friends of Banner Mountain
- Mountain Lakes Estates HOA
- Tahoe-Donner Association
- Greater Cement Hill Neighborhood Association
- Greater Alta Sierra Community
- Golden Oaks HOA
- Rattlesnake Ridge Estates
- Ridgeview Woodlands HOA
- Cascade Shores HOA
- Glenwood-Maidu-Charlene Neighborhood
- Rattlesnake Neighborhood
- Toller Ridge Court
- Stonebridge HOA
- Great Champion Neighborhood
- the Gazebos
- Sherwood Forest Firewise
- Lower Colfax Firewise
- Darkhorse HOA
- Lake Vera Purdon
- Salmon Mines

Funding would also provide for recruiting new communities to commit to becoming a designated Firewise Community through the national program recognition. The FSCNC has embraced the national Firewise Communities program and actively promotes and encourages a multi-agency effort designed to reach beyond the fire service by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and residents in the ongoing effort to protect lives, property, and natural resources from the risk of wildfire - before a fire starts. The FSCNC is proud to include the County of Nevada as a partner in these goals.

The FSCNC was recognized in 2010 by the National Fire Protection Association with the Firewise Leadership Award by quickly outpacing other counties in California in establishing new Firewise Communities. To date, FSCNC has worked with 22 individual communities in Nevada County to complete and/or retain their Firewise Community certification status. An additional 24 communities are currently in the process of becoming certified. FSCNC continues to actively promote Firewise Community certification throughout Nevada County.

FSCNC works in conjunction with local fire chiefs, CAL FIRE, and Registered Professional Foresters (RPF) to develop individual community wildfire hazard assessment reports, recommendations, and associated action plans to proactively address the wildfire hazard.

Continuing education for wildfire prevention is necessary due to the ongoing influx of new residents moving to the wildland from urban areas of our state. Most newcomers are unaware of the high wildfire hazard in Nevada County, or how best to mitigate it on their property and in the community. New development is ongoing and the need for awareness of Firewise concepts is critical.

Organization Background:

The FSCNC was established in 1998 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation serving all residents of Nevada County. The organization is committed to delivering proactive fire prevention programs and projects to reduce losses from wildfire and promote the national Firewise Communities program throughout Nevada County.

The FSCNC organization is audited annually by an independent CPA. Audit reports are available on their website at www.areyoufiresafe.com. The organization is proud to have clean audit reports without exception.

FSCNC’s Mission Statement:

“To provide Firewise education and programs to enhance emergency preparedness for catastrophic wildfire to all citizens in Nevada County in order to reduce the loss of life, property and natural resources and to promote Firewise Communities/USA®; to network with other Fire Safe Councils, Firewise Communities/USA®, governmental agencies and foundations for the benefit of the citizens of Nevada County.”

This mission guides the FSCNC as they deliver community education and assistance programs with regard to fire prevention. Their goal is to enable individual communities to become official nationally recognized Firewise Communities through their direct technical assistance. The FSCNC also provides direct assistance for the annual re-certification process required by the national Firewise program.

The FSCNC is governed by a Board of Directors, representing a cross-section of the community including, professional firefighters, Registered Professional Foresters, businesses, the insurance industry, homeowners, and governmental agency representatives.

2017-2018 FSCNC Board of Directors List:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Chairman	Dennis Cassella	Member at Large
Vice-Chair	Donn Thane	Retired Forest Service
Treasurer/Secretary	Dave Walker	Certified Public Accountant
Director	Bill Drown	Law Enforcement/Fire Protection Council
Director	Hank Weston	Board of Supervisors
Director	Eric Trygg	Member at Large
Director	Pete Williams	Member at Large
Director	Helene Hall	Member at Large
Director	Alan Doerr	Member at Large
Director	Rick Nolle	Real Estate Industry
Director	Don Wagner	Fire Chief’s Association
Associate	Heidi Hall	BOS Alternate
Associate	Crawford Bost	Member at Large
Associate	Bill Houdyschell	HOA Representative
Associate	Jim Mathias	CALFIRE
Associate	Jerry Martinez	Bureau of Land Management
Associate	Jecobie Waters	US Forest Service
Associate	Bob Long	Firewise Coalition
Associate	Gretchen Bennitt	NSAQMD Director

In 2018, the FSCNC Board of Directors updated their strategic plan to guide the FSCNC through the next five years (2018-2023) including their focus on establishing certified Firewise Communities. FSCNC's strategic plan focuses on four specific areas: Funding; Projects; Executive/Personnel; and Education. The FSCNC Board of Directors has formed committees to implement each of these goals and strategies in the corresponding section of the plan.

The FSCNC has worked aggressively to engage homeowners, residents, community leaders, planners, realtors, and developers, to address the wildfire issue, and has achieved award-winning results in the past.

FSCNC's Recent Accomplishments:

Program Title	Description	Results
Firewise Communities <i>(funded by Nevada County Title III and USFS)</i>	Formal outreach and education on the Firewise Communities program to homeowner groups, road associations and communities at risk of catastrophic wildfire	Nevada County has 22 certified Firewise Communities, and 25 on a waiting list. NFPA recently reported that Nevada County has more Firewise Communities than any other county in California.
Defensible Space Chipping Program <i>(Funded by the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District, grants, donations, and memberships)</i>	Door-to-door service which rotates in various areas of the county each week	During the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the chipping program was able to service 249 homes which cleared an estimated 557 acres producing over 15,368 cubic yards of material.
Special Needs Assistance Program <i>(Funded by the Allstate Foundation & PG&E)</i>	Defensible Space clearing for qualified low-income seniors and/or certified physically disabled persons	The program cleared defensible space for 28 homes or approximately 42 acres of clearing.
Defensible Space Advisory Visit <i>(Funded by Nevada County Prop 172, donations, and memberships)</i>	Personal consultation at individual residences to teach how to effectively create and maintain wildfire defensible space.	The program provided 221 one-on-one defensible space educational visits to Nevada County residents at their home.
Education Workshops & Community Presentations <i>(Funded by the Allstate Foundation)</i>	Various topics offered in a classroom setting for focused education on wildfire related issues.	Subjects include Firewise Communities, Creating Effective Defensible Space, Scotch Broom Challenge, and Emergency Preparedness. This program provided 30 educational presentations and workshops in the community last fiscal year.

<p>Scotch Broom Challenge (Funded by undesignated contributions)</p>	<p>A community education and awareness program to control and reduce the highly flammable Scotch Broom and related varieties due to the impact to the landscape as wildfire ladder fuel. A landowner weed wrench loan program is available as part of this program.</p>	<p>Working with cooperating organizations, the Council challenged the community to control this highly flammable and invasive plant. 12 project sites were implemented in 2017, and 10 in 2018. Over 300 volunteers participated in this program.</p>
<p>Children’s Educational Outreach Program (Funded by the Allstate Foundation)</p>	<p>In cooperation with local fire departments, the Council provides age-appropriate educational material for in-school fire education presentations such as elementary Fire ABC’s coloring book, middle- school Wildfire Activity Book, upper grades The Hidden Treasure-Forests & Woody Biomass, and student take home flyers on fire safety topics.</p>	<p>Over 5,000 children annually receive this important fire safe program which includes not only home fire safety, but family evacuation planning, and wildfire topics.</p>
<p>Education Lending Library (Funded by the Allstate Foundation)</p>	<p>Fire related educational books, forestry periodicals, scientific studies, DVD’s (and videos) are loaned to individuals for focused learning.</p>	<p>Titles Include: Firewise Communities Fire Safe Inside and Out; Wildfire: Preventing Home Ignitions; Foresters: Growing Forests for Our Future; the Society of American Foresters Journal of Forestry; Be Cool About Fire Safety; Making Your Home Firewise; Fire Wars; and an Ounce of Prevention...just to name a few.</p>

It is noteworthy that virtually all programs and projects offered by the FSCNC are provided at little to no cost to participants. FSCNC does not require any contribution for accessing services or participating in fuel reduction projects (with one exception for homeowner’s insurance defensible space verifications). Due to the lack of funding for grant writing and overhead/administration, in 2009 the Council’s Board of Directors provided a suggested donation schedule for all FSCNC’s programs which has proven to increase the direct financial contributions from the community. These dollars serve as local matching for the various grant program operations that grants do not provide funding for. In July 2010, the Council began a membership program to help fill the void reduced funding under the Title III program would leave. According to FSCNC’s independent CPA audit for the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the Council raised \$46,725 in donations, \$10,923 from memberships, and close to \$44,870 from fundraising activities.

The audit report verified there were over \$887,723 of in-kind contributions which came from volunteers and material contributions from FSCNC programs. This amount exceeded the match requirement of this program for the 2016-17 fiscal year. FSCNC is humbled by the strong support from the community and are pleased with their progress to become more self-reliant, outside of grant funding.

Their administration costs are normally less than 10% of the program.

Another value of the Firewise Community program in Nevada County is the ability of homeowners to retain their homeowner’s insurance coverage. Many insurance companies have issued non-renewal notices to residents living in Nevada County due to the very high wildfire hazard risk (as rated by CAL FIRE). Beginning in 2012 the USAA, a national insurance carrier, began visiting the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County with the objective of touring teach certified Firewise Community to determine if the ground conditions warranted an effort to establish a rate reduction profile. Their visits were successful in verifying a reduced fire hazard risk in certified Firewise Communities, and they have filed a rate reduction program with the California Insurance Commissioner for homeowners living within certified Firewise Communities. This is a testament to the results the FSCNC’s efforts yield, in terms of the ability to retain homeowners’ insurance, as well as homeowner’s potentially qualifying for financial savings through rate reductions in their premiums. It also demonstrates the success of the Firewise Communities program in terms of creating a sustainable desired condition on the ground for wildfire prevention.

This proposal qualifies for the Forest Reserve Funds under Title III to implement the Firewise Communities program throughout Nevada County. The Title III portion of funding in the current 2018-19 fiscal year represents nearly 8% of the total fiscal year Board approved budget.

This funding will provide for up to 20 community Firewise educational presentations during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 fiscal years. Potential Firewise Communities are being identified with collaboration from the Nevada County Firewise Coalition and other communities identified throughout the year. Ongoing education and outreach for the Firewise program continues as part of FSCNC’s formal Strategic Plan.

Tasks Included:

Homeowner presentations, homeowner association Board of Director presentations, community wildfire hazard field assessments, written hazard assessments with mitigation recommendations, planning for Firewise Community education day celebrations including vendor booths, equipment and product demonstrations, assistance with grant applications for project funding identified in Firewise community assessments, media relations, press releases, and talk radio guest speaking as necessary to entice communities in submitting an application for formal Firewise Community designation.

Expenses:	Amounts:
Salary, taxes, insurance and fringe benefits to conduct Firewise Communities education, outreach and direct assistance to individuals in obtaining and annual certification and retention of the official Firewise Communities USA program	\$40,500
Supplies, printing, travel, advertising related to Firewise Communities	\$ 1,000
FSCNC Administration (supplies, printing/copies, travel, portion of general liability and volunteer insurance, portion of annual fiscal compliance audit, rent, repairs and maintenance and utilities based on hours worked)	\$ 5,500
Total	\$47,000

Utilization of Requested Funding:

The funding requested provides for the FSCNC to conduct education, promotion, and implementation of the national Firewise Communities concept with FSCNC’s institutional base of operations providing fire prevention programs throughout Nevada County. Specifically, the requested Forest Reserve funds will be utilized for staff, program expenses, and administrative costs to develop and retain Firewise Communities in Nevada County which highlight these activities with radio, print, and television media outlets.

The annual Prepare for Fire Season Guide is coordinated by the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County in collaboration with the Forest Service, CAL FIRE, BLM, PG&E, the Nevada County Fire Chief's Association, CA State Parks, County Office of Emergency Management, County Sheriff, and several local Fire Districts featuring Firewise Communities education and promotion of landowner assistance programs to help enlist communities.

The FSCNC expanded the awareness and participation of the Firewise Communities program and direct landowner education and assistance with the Defensible Space Chipping program, Special Needs Assistance program, Scotch Broom Challenge, Children's Education, and community outreach and education.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is the sponsor of the national Firewise Community program. The FSCNC was given the 2010 Firewise Leadership Award from the NFPA in recognition of the success of their efforts to establish Firewise Communities in Nevada County. There are seven awards given across the nation, with the FSCNC being the only organization in the State of California so honored.

The Fire Safe Council is dedicated to continuing to fund this effort through private grants, community memberships, and donations once the Title III grant funding has expired. The FSCNC is the primary organization in Nevada County solely dedicated to wildfire prevention.

Success Measurements:

The Firewise Communities program serves any Nevada County resident willing to participate. The expected outcome is to add designated Firewise Communities throughout all of Nevada County to the national registry. FSCNC's goal includes re-certification of the 22 existing Firewise Communities, and to add a minimum of four additional Firewise Communities in 2019. Further benefits include an overall reduced risk of wildfires, the creation of safer evacuation routes, and reduced potential for structural loss due to awareness of the effectiveness of defensible space and hardening of structures in the event of catastrophic wildfires. Other measurements of success through earned media placements for Firewise objectives are tracked to indicate the success of FSCNC's educational and outreach efforts. The expected outcome for media relations activities would include 12 printed and radio placements. The timeline to complete the process to become a certified Firewise Community typically takes 12-18 months from the initial commitment, to completing the formal wildfire hazard assessment, writing the report with recommendations, developing an action plan, and hosting a community education day.

Thank you for considering funding the Firewise Communities program at the FSCNC. The County's continued support and strong partnership with the FSCNC will create more Firewise Communities in Nevada County while improving overall public safety through wildfire fuel mitigation. If you would like further information or need clarification on items contained herein, please contact me at (530) 272-1122.

Sincerely yours,

Jamie Jones
FSCNC Chief Operating Officer