



Fire Safe Council of Nevada County
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April 21, 2017

Trisha Tillotson, P.E.
Director of Public Works
Nevada County Department of Public Works
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959

RE: Grant Proposal for Fire Hazard Reduction Along Major Nevada County Ingress/Egress Roads

Dear Trisha:

Thank you for your support of our proposed grant application to the California Fire Safe Council for increasing the scope and effectiveness of vegetation management along our County roads for safe citizen evacuation and access for firefighting equipment.

Below is our concept paper, which will guide our online application to achieve these objectives. The additional grant funds will enable us to partner to achieve the stated objectives:

Fire Hazard Reduction Along Major Nevada County Ingress/Egress Roads

The likelihood of wildland fires in Nevada County is high due to dense vegetation and extensive human access and development. Longer fire seasons, warmer temperatures and more prevalent drought periods further exacerbate the likelihood of fire starts, rapid spread and high intensity fire. These conditions make it more critical that residents and visitors have multiple safe ways to evacuate during rapidly moving wildland fires. The safety and effectiveness of wildland firefighters is also affected by the dense condition of vegetation and fuels along major roadways. During wildland fires, it takes substantial time to do even minimal clearance along roads used for fire breaks when they are in a high fuel condition. Fires in this area often move very fast and can outpace the ability to clear along a road. The safety of firefighters is impacted by dense fuels along roads; making firefighter injury or even death more likely. Reducing the fuels along major roads in the county, strategically selected can improve the safety of the residents and visitors, increase the effectiveness and safety of firefighters, and reduce fire suppression costs. The federal Fire Safe Clearinghouse currently has grant opportunities that could be used to match funds by Nevada County to reduce fuels along strategic roads. The Nevada County Fire Safe Council would like to collaborate with Nevada County to take advantage of this opportunity.

The Fire Safe Council has been actively working to reduce fuel hazard in the county for over 19 years. This has included fire prevention education, fuel chipping programs, reduction of fuels around homes of low income seniors, scotch broom fuel hazard removal, working with communities to obtain Firewise Community recognition, and partnering with various agencies to reduce fuels in strategic areas, including along major roads. But the need is greater than resources to get this work done. Past wildland fires in the county, including the 49er fire in 1988, the Dog Bar Fire in 2014 and the Lowell fire in 2015 have reminded residents, firefighters, and government officials that the threat is real and at the bare minimum, having a safe way in and out is critical. Even in areas where fuels have been reduced along major roads, the vegetation has often grown or filled back in. Further, an increased awareness of the biology and spread of invasive plants that are particularly flammable, such as scotch broom, has led and emphasis on decreasing spread by equipment and using labor intensive methods of removal like hand pulling.

The Fire Safe Council proposes to develop and submit a grant proposal to reduce fuels along major roads in western Nevada County (see attached spreadsheet). Fuels reduction treatment will be implemented for a total of 60 road miles. The hazard fuel reduction activities will include thinning dense patches of trees, chipping, or removing small trees and dense shrubs, pulling scotch broom and pruning or limbing up low growing branches. The treatments will be sufficient to reduce or remove the likelihood of crown fire initiation. Treatments will be done in a manner to avoid the spread of non-native invasive plants that are highly flammable including Scotch broom and star-thistle.

The Fire Safe Council will write, submit and manage the grant for the allowable 15% administration fee of the total grant funded portion of the project of \$200,000. The County would provide the required 50% local matching funds from existing budgeted expenses for \$200,000. Dr. JoAnn Fites-Kauffman has agreed to provide a local in-kind match for ongoing monitoring and we will seek additional in-kind matching funds from Firewise Communities engaging in private roadside vegetation management where the proposed management locations coincide. Therefore, the total project application will exceed \$400,000. Grant applications are due May 12, 2017 with funding notifications sometime in July with funds arriving around October 2017 for implementation.

Thank you again for working with us to make Nevada County safer from catastrophic wildfire. Your partnership is critical to the success of our mission.

Please let me know if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you and your staff for a successful outcome.

Sincerely,



Joanne Drummond
Executive Director

April 19, 2017

Nevada County Board of Supervisors
950 Maidu Avenue Suite 200
Nevada City, CA 95959

& Trisha Tillotson
Director of Public Works
950 Maidu Avenue Suite 170
Nevada City, CA 95959



Dear Supervisors and Ms. Tillotson,

Nevada County's 20 nationally Firewise Communities and the 18 in training, kindly request that we figure out a path forward for ensuring that all county maintained roads receive ongoing and effective hazardous vegetation abatement. We are reaching out to express our concern about the hazardous vegetation maintenance along all county maintained roads and to offer one idea which may bring additional resources to bear. Specifically, we are willing to work with the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County to seek grant funding which can be used to support doing additional roadside vegetation management, with a treatment prescription to lengthen the effectiveness. We are also asking that the County make ongoing roadside vegetation management a higher priority and devote additional funding before the 2017 fire season begins.

Background

Through County Ordinance No. 2411, the Board of Supervisors have stated "it shall be the duty of every owner, occupant, and person in control of any parcel or any interest therein, which is located in the unincorporated territory of the County of Nevada to abate therefrom, and from all sidewalks and roadways on or immediately adjacent thereto (except for those roads accepted into the County maintained system), all combustible material and hazardous vegetation which constitutes a fire hazard and public nuisance which may endanger or damage neighboring property or forestland." More specifically the ordinance requires "removing combustible materials within a minimum of a ten (10) foot wide strip of land beyond the shoulder of the roadway, to a height of fifteen (15) feet along the boundary of a parcel."

As Firewise Communities, we understand the importance of creating defensible space and safe evacuation routes within the communities that we live in. Accordingly, we have devoted considerable resources to improve defensible space around our homes and along any privately owned roads that fall within our Firewise Community footprints. Unfortunately, many of the county roads that serve as the main arteries to our neighborhoods are not managed consistently and often lack the required vegetation management clearances. This leads to excessive fuel loading along the roads that are supposed to be used as evacuation routes and provide access for firefighting equipment.

Joint Partnership

We feel there is a joint duty to abate hazardous vegetation along privately owned roads and along those roads that have been accepted into the County maintained system. Accordingly, we are willing to seek grant funding from the California Fire Safe Council's Clearinghouse if the County will agree to provide the necessary local matching funds and implement the work with a treatment prescription to lengthen the viability of the treatment either under contractual agreement or by County crews, to have it happen sooner than later.

Please join the Nevada County Firewise Communities and the Fire Safe Council in partnership to help make our community safer from catastrophic wildfire.

Sincerely,

Your Nevada County Firewise Community Partners

Cc. Joanne Drummond, Fire Safe Council of Nevada County
CAL FIRE
All Local Nevada County Fire Districts