



Fire Safe Council of Nevada County
P.O. Box 1112
Grass Valley, CA 95945
Phone (530) 272-1122
Fax (530) 648-1122
www.areyoufiresafe.com

October 15, 2021

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:

\$27,500 for the 2021-22 fiscal year

\$27,500 for the 2022-23 fiscal year

Total funding = \$55,000

Agency/Organization Identification:

Name: Fire Safe Council of Nevada County (FSCNC)

Contact Person: Jamie Jones, Executive Director, CEO

Address: P.O. Box 1112, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Phone: (530) 272-1122

Fax: (530) 648-1122

Email: jamie@areyoufiresafe.com

Project Title:

Firewise Communities Program

Project Description:

The FSCNC has developed and successfully delivered many fire prevention programs throughout Nevada County for the past twenty-three years. The Council is proud of their success and actively seeks 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 the efforts to retain the 64 existing Firewise Communities, the certification of 40 new Firewise Communities currently on the waitlist, and the recertification of 23 existing Firewise communities as required by Firewise USA.

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 64 individual communities in Nevada County to complete and/or retain their Firewise Community certification status. An additional 40 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. Fire Safe Council of Nevada County was the first Fire Safe Council in the state of California and is the Regional Coordinator for Nevada Counties Firewise communities. 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.

FSCNC's Mission Statement:

“The Fire Safe Council is a non-profit, local volunteer organization. We are dedicated to making Nevada County safer from catastrophic wildfire through fire safety projects and education.”

This mission guides the FSCNC as they deliver community education and assistance programs about 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.

2021 FSCNC Board of Directors List:

| <u>Position</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Representing</u> |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Chairman | Donn Thane | Retired Forest Service |
| Vice-Chair | Rick Nolle | Real Estate Industry |
| Treasurer | Dave Walker | Certified Public Accountant |
| Secretary | Warren Knox | Member at Large |
| Director | Hank Weston | Member at Large |
| Director | Sue Hoek | Board of Supervisors |
| Director | Eric Trygg | Member at Large |
| Director | Pete Williams | Member at Large |
| Director | Steve Eubanks | Member at Large |
| Director | Alan Doerr | Member at Large |
| Director | Terry McMahan | Fire Chief's Association |

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 64 certified Firewise Communities, and 40 on a waiting list. NFPA recently reported that Nevada County continues to be a top county for Firewise Communities in California. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Landscape Fuel Reduction Projects</p> | <p>Ponderosa West Grass Valley Defense Zone Project; Ponderosa Phase II; South County Fuel Break; Lake Wildwood Fuel Reduction Project; Deer Creek Fuel Break</p> | <p>Completed 400 acres of fuels reduction under the Ponderosa West Defense Zone Priority Project. An additional 600 acres was completed under the grant. Project is close to completion and has less than 100 acres to be finalized.</p> |
| <p>Defensible Space Chipping Program</p> | <p>Door-to-door service which rotates in various areas of the county each week</p> | <p>During the 2019-20 fiscal year, the chipping program was able to service over 700 homes which cleared an estimated 1050 acres of defensible space.</p> |
| <p>Annual Green Waste Drop Program</p> | <p>Provide free green waste drop days to residents in Nevada County in partnership with the County of Nevada – Office of Emergency Services and Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District.</p> | <p>In 2018-19 this partnership collected 500 tons of green waste. In 2019-20 over 5000 tons were collected and processed. Processed mulch was distributed back into the community.</p> |
| <p>Access and Functional Needs Defensible Space Clearing</p> | <p>Defensible Space clearing for qualified low-income seniors and/or certified physically disabled persons</p> | <p>In 2020, the program cleared Defensible space for 40 homes or approximately 60 acres of clearing.</p> |
| <p>Low Cost Defensible Space Clearing</p> | <p>Low cost defensible space clearing for those who do not qualify within the Access and Functional Needs Clearing income requirements.</p> | <p>New program launched in 2020-21 fiscal year on a limited basis. Year to date, over 75 homes have utilized the program to gain defensible space compliance.</p> |
| <p>Defensible Space Advisory Visit</p> | <p>Personal consultation at individual residences to teach how to effectively create and maintain wildfire defensible space.</p> | <p>The program provided over 1200 (2019-20) and one-on-one defensible space educational visits to Nevada County residents at their home.</p> |
| <p>Education Workshops & Community Presentations</p> | <p>Various topics offered in a classroom setting for focused education on wildfire related issues.</p> | <p>Subjects include Firewise Communities, Creating Effective Defensible Space, Scotch Broom Challenge, and Emergency Preparedness. This program provided 50 educational presentations and workshops in the community last fiscal year.</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Scotch Broom Challenge</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. 20 project sites were implemented in 2019-20. Over 300 volunteers participated in this program.</p> |
| <p>Children’s Educational Outreach Program</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</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. 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.

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 each certified Firewise Community to determine if the ground conditions warranted an effort to establish a rate reduction profile. 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 2021-22 and 2022-23 fiscal years.

This funding will dedicate staff to support 64 existing certified Firewise Communities, certify 40 additional communities, and recertify 23 communities, as well as deliver 40 Firewise educational presentations during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 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 | \$45,500 |
| Supplies, printing, travel, advertising related to Firewise Communities | \$ 3,000 |
| 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) | \$ 6,500 |
| Total | \$55,000 |

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 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 23 existing Firewise Communities that need recertification, and to certify the 40 waitlisted Firewise Communities in 2021-22 and 2022-23. 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 as little as a month to a year depending on each community's level of participation and preparedness. This captures 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
Executive Director, CEO