

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Safe Drinking Water,
Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of
2006 (Proposition 84)**

Applicant: COARSEGOLD RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Project Title: WILLOW CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PLANNING PROJECT

Subregion: SOUTH

County: MADERA

SNC Funding: \$60,764.00

Total Project Cost: \$85,366.25

Application Number: 317

Final Score: 91.3

PROJECT SCOPE

This project will complete the planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/ California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) analysis necessary to successfully repair several high priority meadows within the 80,000 acre Willow Creek watershed, which contains 290 acres of meadows, 10 miles of stream and 42 high priority meadows within the Sierra National Forest. This will promote watershed health by improving water quality, quantity, and aquatic habitat of the Willow Creek watershed. Vegetation and fuels treatments will help to decrease the chance of wildfires within these areas. Outreach will be conducted to youth groups and community members about the project and they will be invited to volunteer in the project implementation phase. This project is consistent with Proposition 84 requirements and SNC goals. The estimated total of resources leveraged for this project is \$24,601.80. The BLRD will begin the implementation of these meadow restoration projects in the summer of 2012.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Meet with SNC to plan for CEQA component of project	May 2011
Complete field survey reports for required for conducting CEQA/NEPA analysis of meadow restoration in the Willow Creek Watershed	June-October 2011

NEPA/CEQA plan development	November 2011-May 2012
Submit six month progress report to SNC	November 2011
Submit twelve month progress report to SNC	May 2012
Cooperatively conduct NEPA/CEQA analysis/ compliance with appropriate State and Federal agencies for meadow restoration in the Willow Creek Watershed	June-December 2012
Two youth oriented field trips to Willow Creek Watershed restoration project area	June 2011 – December 2012
Submit eighteen month progress report to SNC	November 2012
Complete development of an outreach presentation about the Willow Creek Watershed restoration project and post on Coarsegold RCD website	July 2011
Eight outreach presentations to the public, primary youth oriented groups, on the Willow Creek Watershed restoration project (Each partner and group involved will obtain a electronic copy of the presentation)	July 2011 – December 2012
Submit completed field survey reports; adopted NEPA/CEQA document(s); and Section 404 Army Corps of Engineers and Section 401 Regional Water Quality Control Board Wetland Permits to SNC	December 2012
Submit final report to SNC	January 2013
FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST	February 1, 2013

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Project related Staff/Personnel expenses (GIS specialist, project manager, hydrology crew, archeologist, botanist, and other staff required for the proposed action and completion of NEPA/CEQA analysis	\$45,539.00
Project related travel/meeting expenses (mileage and field trips costs)	3,400.00
Project related materials/supplies (River Morphs Analysis software)	2,300.00
Outreach materials/supplies	300.00
Project related consultants (part-time Coarsegold RCD staff)	5,250.00
Administration fee	3,975.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$60,764.00

PROJECT SUPPORT LETTERS

- Central Sierra Watershed Committee
- Madera County Supervisor Tom Wheeler, District 5
- University of California Cooperative Extension, Mariposa County
- Sierra Business Council
- Sierra Resource Conservation District
- Yosemite Unified School District
- Sierra Vista National Scenic Byway Association
- Mariposa County Fire Safe Council
- Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council
- Chowchilla Red Top Resource Conservation District
- Foundation for Resources Conservation
- Southern Sierra Environmental Consulting
- North Fork Community Development Council, Inc.
- Yosemite Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Sierra National Forest, Bass Lake Ranger District

PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

There are four Performance Measures common to all grants. In addition, grantees are required to include between one and three project-specific measures. Performance Measures listed here represent those proposed by applicants and may be modified through further discussion with SNC staff.

- Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments
- Number of Organizations Included in Collaborative Planning Process

PROJECT SUMMARY

County: Madera

Applicant: Coarsegold Resource Conservation District

Project Title: Willow Creek Watershed Restoration Planning Project

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this planning project is to complete the planning and NEPA/CEQA analysis necessary to successfully repair several high-priority meadows within the 80,000 acre Willow Creek watershed. This will promote watershed health by improving water quality, quantity, and aquatic habitat of the Willow Creek watershed. The ultimate goal of this project is to partner with the USDA, Forest Service, Bass Lake Ranger District to repair high priority meadow systems and to collaborate with appropriate scientists, to educate and develop a model that displays the imperative functions that meadow systems play and how proper meadow function will be crucial to overall watershed health in the face of climate change. Stabilization and restoration of these meadow systems will improve or restore the hydrologic function creating a 'positive downstream effect' on the rivers, lakes and streams alike. The results of restoring these meadows will have a beneficial effect on water timing of the entire watershed, allowing for more water availability in the late summer. Vegetation and fuels treatments will be integral part of each meadow restoration project, which will help to decrease the chance of wildfires within these areas. As part of the project, youth groups and community members will be educated in the importance of meadow restoration and invited to volunteer in the project implementation phase.

PROJECT SCOPE

This planning grant will focus on developing a restoration plan (i.e., the "proposed action") for the NEPA/CEQA analysis and obtaining the final NEPA/CEQA documents. This grant will allow the appropriate specialist to develop the proposed action and complete the NEPA/CEQA analysis for 290 acres of meadows and 10 miles of stream. Within the Willow Creek watershed there are 42 high priority meadows that are home to endangered and Forest Service sensitive species and some rare mosses. The ability of these meadows to function properly is imperative to all downstream water users in that, quality, quantity, and timing are currently highly impacted and not properly controlled. This planning grant will obtain the NEPA/CEQA documents needed so that meadow restoration can occur. The USDA Forest Service, Sierra National Forest, Bass Lake Ranger District (here on noted as BLRD) has some implementation funding available and is currently working to obtain additional funds to allocate to the restoration of these meadows. It is the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District's (Coarsegold RCD) intension to actively engage a younger audience to learn about the best-practices of meadow restoration, the effect that meadow systems have on our watershed and the upcoming risk that are linked to climate change. To do so, the Coarsegold RCD will hire a part-time staff person to develop and present eight presentations throughout Madera County. To further support these efforts the staff person will also organize, plan, develop and execute two youth field trips.

Nature and Extent of Work: The work completed under this grant will consist of a 10-month planning process, which will lead to three-years of implementation/restoration projects. The planning process will include:

- GIS analysis and preparation of the project plan maps and graphics for the NEPA/CEQA analysis
- Hydrology surveys and the evaluation of project logistics
- Silvicultural, botanical and range surveys
- Archeology evaluation
- Recreation/Road engineering evaluation directly effecting meadows
- Assessment of fuels load and feasibility of possible prescribed fires
- The use of the above results to develop and produce a complete NEPA/CEQA analysis
- The development of eight educational presentation to a variety of target audiences, focusing on local youth
- The development, organization and execution of two youth field trips

The desired outcomes from this planning grant are to:

- Obtain the appropriate NEPA/CEQA documents needed for 290 acres of meadows and 10 miles of stream, where in lies 42 high priority meadows
- Inform a younger audience of the critical role that meadows play within a watershed, and how climate change might affect these systems in the future

Role of Partners:

This planning project has been developed with the BLRD through a close collaboration with its resource specialist and managers. Through this key partnership, we have been able to identify 42 high priority meadows within the Willow Creek watershed that are in need of immediate restoration. Impaired meadows can have a detrimental effect on water timing and water quality, which in turn can affect critical aquatic habitat and downstream beneficial uses. The BLRD has existing funds and is obtaining additional funds to allocate to the restoration of these meadows but currently lacks planning funds. The level of NEPA/CEQA required, "Categorical Exclusion" (FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, 36 CFR 222.6 (e)(7)) does not entail scoping, public outreach or community education. Therefore the Coarsegold RCD is also applying for funding to effectively reach and educate the public, particularly youth, about the vital role of meadows and the real effects that climate change may have on them in years to come. This partnership will allow us to leverage our combined resources and accomplish more restoration targets in these high priority meadows and critical aquatic habitat throughout the watershed as well as to develop and implement the educational outreach component. Moreover, this partnership allows for the most cost effective NEPA/CEQA analysis to be conducted due to the appropriate staff currently in place. The involvement of the BLRD maximizes time efficiency by using resource specialists familiar with the meadows and the water improvement needs within them. Other key relationships, which are listed below, provide strong assets for the educational outreach component. Our diverse range of supporters can each outreach to the public, inviting them to attend and participate in the informational educational components that Coarsegold RCD will be delivering. Additionally some of these partnerships will help establish presentation components, provide unique insights and act as speakers at educational forums. It is the role of the BLRD to do all fieldwork, data gathering and plan development necessary to develop the proposed action and complete the appropriate level of NEPA/CEQA. The Coarsegold RCD role is to hire a part-time staff person to develop, organize and present eight educational presentations as well as organize, collaborate and execute two field trips. Coarsegold RCD intends to primarily target the youth of Madera County, including, Madera County High Schools, Community Development Councils, 4-H Clubs, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, local non-profits and town hall meetings.

Letters of Support

Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council, North Fork Community Development Council, Southern Sierra Environmental Consulting, Foundation of Natural Resources, Chowchilla Red Top RCD, Eastern Madera Fire Safe Council, Mariposa Fire Safe Council, Sierra VISTA National Scenic Byway Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, Yosemite High School, U.S. Forest Service, Sierra Resource Conservation District, Sierra Business Council, Central Sierra Watershed Committee, Madera County Supervisor,

SNC PROJECT DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	
NEPA/CEQA field work and data gathering	6/2011 – 10/2011	10/31/2010
NEPA/CEQA plan development	10/2011 – 12/2011	12/31/2011
NEPA/CEQA analysis	1/2012 – 3/2012	3/31/2012
Eight educational outreach presentations	7/2011 – 2/2012	2/29/2012
Two youth oriented field trips	6/2011 – 3/2010	3/30/2012

Specialist Data Central

*The BLRD will begin the implementation of these meadow restoration projects in the summer of 2012. The funding available for such restoration projects is coming from annual funds of the BLRD and PG&E monies. Currently the BLRD is applying for additional funding through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Additionally, Sierra Nevada Conservancy implementation dollars may be applied for in the future.

SNC PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Proposed action and completion of NEPA/CEQA analysis	\$47,839.20
Educational outreach component (part-time staff, presentations & field trip)	\$8,950.00
Administration fee (6% of total project cost)	\$3,975.25
SNC GRANT TOTAL	\$60,764.45