

Block II

Grant # 070055: Mariposa County Community Conservation Wildfire Protection Plan

Applicant: Mariposa Fire Safe Council

Grant Category: SOG 3

Amount Requested: \$69,911

Purpose: The development and completion of a Community Conservation Wildfire Protection Plan (**CCWPP**) is vital for the preplanning, prioritization and a continued reference guide from which conservation principles can be considered when approaching any of the project areas listed within such as; Fuel Reduction-Watershed Protection Projects, Fire-Watershed Protection Outreach Education, Public Resources Code 4290 Inspections, Defensible Space Planning, Monitoring of Projects, Designating Appropriate Research Projects, and Collaboration and Coordination among; Protection, Environmental, Cultural Agencies, Conservation Organizations, Forest & Conservation Industry, User Groups and Concerned Citizens.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends authorization of this grant as proposed at the recommended funding level of \$69,911.

Letters of Support:

California Fire Safe Council Inc. Board of Directors

CEQA: The proposal is not defined as a project according to CEQA.

Project Description Summary from Grant Application:

Wildland fire is the number one natural disaster that threatens the lives, property, resources and vast watershed of Mariposa County. The Community Conservation and Wildfire Protection Plan (CCWPP) is designed to assist communities in balancing fire safety with resource values and watershed protection for Mariposa County as well as California's Sierra Nevada Region.

The CCWPP will identify communities at risk within Mariposa County, prioritize fuel reduction and mitigation efforts, identify outreach education efforts, identify research efforts and develop a blueprint to reach certain watershed protection-fire safety goals. The plan also will scientifically define areas of concern thus allowing for prioritization of protection/mitigation efforts and proper conservation of historical, archaeological, natural resource and watershed values.

The CCWPP will be developed collaboratively and involve Mariposa County Fire, Cal Fire, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Mariposa County OES, Mariposa Public Utilities District, Southern Sierra Mi-Wuk Nation, Mariposa Resource Conservation District, U.S.D.A. Natural Resources

Conservation Service, Upper Merced River Watershed Council, Mariposa County High School ROP Fire Technology Class Grizzlies Fire Department, Southwest Interface Team (SWIFT) and private landowner concerns.

The CCWPP community outreach and education program is designed to educate developers, homeowners, citizen groups and visitors to the concepts of fire prevention, fuels management, fire management and natural resource conservation education.

The CCWPP is a blueprint of actions that are necessary in order to provide guidelines for present and future protection measures, fuels modification projects and conservation mitigation efforts to protect life, property and natural resources.

The CCWPP project area affects the Chowchilla River, North & South Fork Merced River and Fresno River watersheds, including the watersheds of numerous lakes, reservoirs, creeks, gulches and meadows (for complete list and maps please see attached.) The project area has a history of extreme fire behavior. Heavy fuel loading and steep terrain combine to create a condition under which fires in the area have a rapid rate of spread and burn at very high intensity, therefore severely damaging soils. This is supported by recent fire history (1996 Stumpfield Fire, 1961 Harlow Fire, 1962 Timberlodge Fire and 1959 & 1968 Nelson Cove Fires.) We cannot immediately affect climate or topography, therefore treating fuels is essential to prevent large and damaging wildland fires. Fuel treatment, when done properly, is also the most effective way to improve and protect our watersheds. Modifying, reducing and removing hazardous fuels increases the quantity and quality of water available, while decreasing the likelihood of occurrence of large and damaging wildland fires, which lead to soil damage, erosion and runoff into creeks, streams, rivers and lakes. Another benefit of proper fuel treatment is significant improvement in wildlife habitat. As a result of this project the Chowchilla River, North & South Fork Merced River and Fresno River watersheds will be less vulnerable to soil damage and erosion caused by large, high intensity wildfires, with outcomes from prioritized fuels projects including increased quality and quantity of water available in the watersheds, improvement of wildlife habitat and improved forage for grazing.

The Mariposa County Fire Safe Council has begun work on our countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) using the Society of American Foresters handbook "Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan" as our guide document. However, when we applied for and were awarded the BLM grant we are currently working under to assist fire agencies in completing the plan, we believed it to be 70% completed. We still expect to complete a first draft CWPP by the end of the BLM grant term. The Council needs this additional funding to hire a contractor to complete our countywide CCWPP by adding technical, conservation and watershed elements to the draft as specified in the "Sierra Nevada Community Conservation and Wildfire Protection Plan Guidebook." This proposal will be in lieu of the previous proposal submitted to the California Fire Safe Council, since other grant funds were made available for that proposal.

This CCWPP is our number one priority as it is required to access funding from local, state and federal sources to continue critical fuel treatment throughout Mariposa County. Mariposa County Fire has also informed us that, when completed, our CCWPP will drive the completion of our DMA-2000 Plan, which will open additional doors to disaster mitigation funding. Funding from all sources will continue to improve quality of life for our residents and visitors as well as improve the health of the Sierra Nevada watershed in which we live.