2. Project Summary

Located at the base of a steep glacial valley thirteen miles west of Bridgeport, CA, the Twin Lakes are interconnected lakes each nearly one mile long and a half mile wide capturing the cool, clear meltwaters of mountain streams flowing from the jagged peaks of the Matterhorn and the Sawtooth Ridge rising thousands of feet above to the west. The lakes are flanked by Hunewill and Robinson Peak as they rise steeply to the north and by Crater Crest as it ascends precipitously to the south. The complex wild ecosystem surrounding Twin Lakes supports a rich abundance of plants, conifer forests, quaking Aspen, and wildlife. The Twin Lakes area has not had a significant fire event for over 50 years. The residents of the Twin Lakes community live in an intermix of year round and summer residences, recreational camping and fishing resorts, and agricultural properties located within the dense multistoried mixed pine stands, mature aspen stands, prized trout fisheries and pristine watersheds. Most homes were built in the 40's 50's and 60's with modern construction mixed in. Wood siding with asphalt or metal roofs are the most common type of construction, but, there are nearly as many wood shake roofs as ignition resistant roofs. Most residences are accessed by rough narrow dirt roads and some long narrow driveways. Many road segments have grades in excess of 10%. The vertical clearance on some roads is obstructed with overhanging tree limbs. Street Signs would be hard to see in dark or smoky conditions. There are fire hydrants, but the water pressure, and therefore the hydrant pressures, are known to be poor. Only a narrow asphalt two lane road provides entry into and out of Twin Lakes. The Bridgeport Fire Department's preplanning indicates that because of heavy residential and recreational use they would not be able to respond to a wildfire event in Twin Lakes for hours. They believe that during a catastrophic fire event both lanes would have to be used for evacuating nearly 3 to 5 thousand people. An alternative evacuation route is not feasible.

Over the past few decades, fire suppression policies and other management activities have resulted in increased tree density, ladder fuels, and decayed brush and wood. The threat of wildland fire is extreme. A wildland fire in the Twin Lakes community has the potential to result in loss of life and property; affect residents' water supply and wastewater treatment systems; and significantly alter or degrade water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, healthy soils, and scenic quality within a popular, year−round residential and recreation area.

The funding of biological, wildlife & archeological surveys and NEPA planning will help pave the way to do a significant and substantial fuels reduction treatments within the residential, scenic and recreational areas of the Twin Lakes drainage.

This project is a cooperative effort with the Bridgeport Fire Department, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Twin Lakes FSC, Twin Lakes Estate Home Owners Association, Mono Village Resort, Doc and Al’s Resort, Rancheria Homeowners Association, Recreation Residents Home Owners Association and Mono County. The project would occur within to National Forest System (NFS) lands that are adjacent to private lands within the Wildland Urban Intermix defense zone. This project is strategically located within an area that is high priority for treatment due to the dense vegetative conditions, terrain, prevailing wind patterns, and proximity to a popular year-round recreation corridor which is also the main access point for numerous wilderness trails and mountain lakes. The Twin Lakes area is also home to the CA state record Brown Trout and a major fisheries program. Revenue in excess of 12 million dollars annually is generated from this region and is Northern Mono Counties principal tourist destination. At the height of the summer Forests in this area were historically subject to frequent, low intensity fires that resulted in open fire-resistant stands of trees. The lack of fire has resulted in a change in species composition, structure, and density, and has allowed dense vegetation and surface fuels to accumulate. The combination of high recreational use and dense forest conditions within the project area make the area prone to the risk of a stand-replacing catastrophic wildfire. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) community hazard rating for this area is Extreme. This