

Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Block Grant

North Coast Resource Partnership Work Plan

Region Description:

The North Coast Region includes all lower and upper watersheds that flow to the north coast of California between Sonoma and Del Norte counties. This includes some or all of the following counties: Sonoma, Mendocino, Humboldt, Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, and Trinity, including sovereign Tribal lands contained therein. The region coincides with the State Water Resources Control Board's Region 1. The region will be divided into watershed, hydrologic units, and governmental boundaries. The North Coast region includes over 19,000 square miles or 12% of California's landscape. It is a "source region" – for clean water, carbon sequestration, and biological diversity and provides these benefits to other parts of California and the world. The North Coast is a rural region in California that shares many of the land use and climate change challenges facing the rest of the state, but has its own unique challenges, including degraded built infrastructure, legacy issues affecting the region's forests and watersheds, as well as a decentralized population that is significantly economically disadvantaged. More than 89% percent of the North Coast region's geographic area is considered economically disadvantaged and 57% of the region is considered severely economically disadvantaged.

North Coast Resource Partnership:

The North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP) works collaboratively across Northern California to enhance natural and working lands as well as built infrastructure. Since 2005, the NCRP has successfully integrated federal, state, regional and local priorities and utilized a multi-benefit approach to identify and seek funding for the highest priority projects throughout the region. The focus of the NCRP includes forest and watershed health, salmonid recovery, water quality and supply, intra-regional cooperation, energy independence, climate change mitigation and adaptation, public health and economic vitality, with a specific emphasis on projects that benefit economically disadvantaged communities. The NCRP has ranked highly in numerous grant solicitations and has effectively managed more than \$67 million (M) in water, climate change, and ecosystem restoration grant funding to the North Coast, while leveraging more than \$110 M in matching funds.

NCRP Governance, Technical Review, and Stakeholder Engagement:

The NCRP coalition consists of seven North Coast counties (Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, and Sonoma), North Coast Tribes, and county water agencies. The NCRP governance framework consists of two committees: the Policy Review Panel (PRP), which is the NCRP governing body made up of locally elected county and Tribal officials, and the Technical Peer Review Committee (TPRC), an advisory body to the PRP that provides scientific and technical expertise to the NCRP. The NCRP regularly forms ad hoc committees to provide input and oversight on specific initiatives and grants, and will form a Forestry Ad Hoc Committee comprised of PRP and TPRC members to advise this grant program. The PRP adheres to the Ralph M. Brown Act, ensuring a process that is open, transparent, and inclusive to all stakeholders. The NCRP's process is guided by a Memorandum of Mutual Understandings (MoMU), a non-binding, cooperative agreement intended to

establish the mutual understandings of North Coast stakeholders with respect to their joint efforts towards implementing NCRP plans and projects. The MoMU currently includes more than 110 signatories ranging from local governments, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, resource conservation districts, watershed groups, and interested stakeholders.

Block Grant General Description:

The NCRP will receive a block grant of \$4,037,500 through the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (Program). This is a California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) program, administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) to support regional planning for priority fire resiliency opportunities, pre-project planning and permitting, project demonstration, and outreach and education across the region.

Collaborators:

This Program is multifaceted and will be implemented through collaboration within the NCRP and among multiple partners throughout the region and beyond. For the purposes of clarifying roles and for easy reference, the following table provides the names and roles of the various local, regional, and state collaborators:

TABLE 1. REGIONAL FOREST AND FIRE CAPACITY PROGRAM COLLABORATORS
NCRP and Affiliates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Review Panel (PRP): The NCRP governing body made up of locally elected county and Tribal officials. Approval from the PRP will be sought for significant Program decisions. • Technical Peer Review Committee (TPRC): An advisory body to the PRP that provides scientific and technical expertise to the NCRP. The TPRC will be involved in project review and selection. • NCRP Planning and Coordination Lead: Contract services provided by West Coast Watershed (WCW). • NCRP Tribal Coordinator: Contract services provided by the California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA). • NCRP Administration and Contracts Lead and Fiscal Sponsor for this grant: Currently filled by Humboldt County (HC) by PRP appointment. • NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee: Committee comprised of PRP and TPRC members to advise this grant program and provide specific input and oversight. • NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors: Representatives from groups and Tribes in the region, supported by Program funding, selected to provide technical review and input on regional and sub-regional priority project planning and help set criteria for the selection of demonstration projects and technical assistance recipients. • NCRP Forestry Consulting Team: The NCRP will hire a Forestry Consulting Team to assist with regional priority planning and technical assistance for project development and permitting.
State Agency Leads
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA): This is a CNRA Program and their input and guidance will be sought as a detailed work plan is developed and throughout the life of the project.

TABLE 1. REGIONAL FOREST AND FIRE CAPACITY PROGRAM COLLABORATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Department of Conservation (DOC): The DOC is administering this Program on behalf of the CNRA and will work closely with the NCRP Administration and Contracting Lead, HC to ensure that the terms of the grant agreement are met.
<p>Regional and Statewide Collaborators</p> <p>Many aspects of this Program will be informed by, developed with input from, reviewed by, and coordinated with members of the following organizations and agencies. In some cases, representatives from these groups will be hired as NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Watershed Research and Training Center (WRTC) • The California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) • The California Forest Management Task Force – Northern Region Prioritization Group • Tribes within the region • Fire Safe Councils and other partners involved in wildfire resiliency work throughout the region • California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), at the Unit, regional, and state level • United States Forest Service (USFS), including representatives from in-region National Forests as well as policy, research, and planning representatives at the local, regional, and federal level • Academic partners and local experts

Grant Administration, Work Plan Approval, and Solicitation Process:

The NCRP has a proven record, since 2005, of equitably administering block grant funding for planning, outreach, technical support, stakeholder engagement, and project implementation within the NCRP region. Under the guidance of the PRP and TPRC, this work has been facilitated over the years by an existing team of NCRP staff and consultants including West Coast Watershed (WCW) as the Planning and Coordination Lead, California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA) as the Tribal Coordinator, and Humboldt County (HC) as the Administration and Contracts Lead. This NCRP grant administration process will be overseen by the existing NCRP staff and consultant team and the TPRC; will align with CNRA goals and requirements; and be approved by the PRP during a public meeting. The grant agreement will be executed by and between the CNRA and the County of Humboldt, on behalf of the NCRP. Grant project implementation will utilize a mix of staff, consultants, and sub-grant recipients to achieve the goals of the CNRA and the requirements of the block grant. A detailed work plan will be developed and maintained by the NCRP staff and consultant team with review by the NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee and approval by the CNRA.

Solicitation and selection of consultants and sub-grants (for planning, outreach, technical support, and demonstration projects) will be conducted via a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process or follow the sole-source protocols of the County of Humboldt where warranted, and California contracting laws and regulations. A detailed solicitation process that guides the RFP or Request for Qualifications (RFQ), review and selection process for sub-contracts and sub-grants will be developed by the NCRP and submitted for approval

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to the CNRA prior to beginning work on this block grant. The solicitation process will include the following elements, and will be shared with the region via the NCRP website prior to the issuance of any RFP or RFQ:

- Background on NCRP and CNRA Objectives and this Solicitation
- Schedule for the NCRP Plan and Project Solicitation
- Project Proposal Review and Selection Process
- Description of the NCRP Project Evaluation and Decision-Making Roles (staff, technical committees, CNRA, NCRP PRP)
- NCRP Project Application, Review and Selection Process
- Guidelines for Public Input and Project Proponent Input during the Project Review Process
- NCRP Conflict of Interest Policy reflecting FPPC (Fair Political Practices Commission) Guidance
- PRP Directed Guidelines for Project Scoring and Selection
- North Coast Resource Partnership Project Proposal Scoring Criteria

For a past example of NCRP solicitation processes, see [2018 NCRP Project Solicitation Guidelines](#).

Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Tasks:

The following tasks outline the NCRP approach to accomplishing the State objectives outlined in the CNRA Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Grant Guidelines. During the execution of all tasks, the NCRP will ensure coordination with CNRA and DOC leads and will collaborate statewide with other block grant recipients, as well as across the region and between sub-regions to allow for information and resource sharing. The NCRP will work closely with the NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors, TPRC, NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee, as well as the WRTC, CFSC, CAL FIRE and USFS staff, regional fire safe councils, and other partners.

Task 1: Grant Administration – County of Humboldt

The County of Humboldt will administer these funds on behalf of the NCRP and respond to the CNRA reporting and compliance requirements associated with the grant. County staff will fill the role of providing fiscal and contracting coordination; maintaining the work plan, ensuring the terms of the grant agreement are met; issuing, awarding, and managing contracts; processing payments; reporting project progress; and providing for an auditable record of all funding allocations.

Task 2: Regional Priority Planning

The NCRP will develop a Regional Priority Plan (RPP) that outlines a region wide strategy for fuel load reduction and forest health, including a list of priority forest health and fire resiliency projects, strategies, and tools. Where relevant, the RPP will include local strategies, projects, and tools for counties and Tribal areas. To support project prioritization, the RPP will utilize existing spatial and non-spatial data for the region, evaluate data gaps, and fill them. Regional data to be analyzed, as available, may include bio-physical features; vegetation types and quality; stand density, tree size, tree mortality, and carbon stocks; sensitive habitats and species; wildfire history, fire regime, fuel loading, and condition class; drinking water supply watersheds; public health and safety information; cultural and ecological values; historic and projected climate and weather patterns; forest product

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infrastructure such as mills, equipment, processing facilities, and transportation options; as well as human capital, including existing and needed workforce capacity. The NCRP will work closely with the CNRA, and other identified partners such as the WRTC, CAL FIRE, USFS, the CFSC, Tribes, regional Fire Safe Councils, and other organizations involved in wildfire resiliency work to develop an annotated outline of the Regional RPP, including sub-regional RPPs for watersheds, counties and Tribal lands designed to integrate into and support the regional RPP. This annotated outline will be reviewed and enhanced by the Forestry Consulting Team, NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee, NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors, and the NCRP staff and consultant team.

Development of the RPP will require technical consultants and advisors that will be comprised of existing NCRP staff and consultants, as well as consultants and advisors selected via competitive and non-competitive awards.

- *Task 2a:* NCRP will hire a forestry consultant team with knowledge and experience related to north coast forest management, fuel load reduction, forest project planning and permitting issues, and indigenous use of fire to work with NCRP staff and partners in the development of the RPP.
- *Task 2b:* NCRP will fund the existing NCRP staff and consultant team (the Planning and Coordination Lead, WCW; the Tribal Coordinator, CIEA; and the Administration and Contracts Lead, HC) to coordinate the oversight and development of the RPP, coordinate regional and local review and input, and share the draft with CNRA and the NCRP PRP for review and approval.
- *Task 2c: NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors:* NCRP will solicit a letter of interest and RFQ to groups and Tribes in the region and beyond, seeking technical review and input on the regional and sub-regional RPPs, as well as criteria for the selection of demonstration projects and technical assistance recipients. NCRP staff and the NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee will review and make a recommendation to the NCRP PRP for the make-up of this group of advisors, comprised of a balance of expertise.
- *Task 2d: GIS Mapping and Data Management:* NCRP will use existing contracted consulting resources for necessary GIS mapping and data management for the RPP, and to support regional analysis of forest management priorities.
- *Task 2e:* NCRP will retain funding to potentially fill data gaps and/or provide additional support for the continued involvement of NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors after preliminary RPP development.

Task 3: Coordination, Outreach and Education

- Based on the priorities identified in the RPP, NCRP staff and consultants will conduct outreach to property owners and stakeholders in the region for all aspects of the Program, using existing NCRP staff and consultants, communications networks such as the NCRP website and listservs. This effort may include holding and/or supporting a series of workshops and webinars in the region.
- The NCRP will work closely with CNRA, DOC, WRTC, the CFSC, and other local organizations to design an outreach and education program and will coordinate its implementation with the CNRA/DOC/WRTC/CFSC statewide outreach program. Outreach (which may include web polling and workshops) will be conducted to gather input, needs and priorities from the region to inform the RPPs, and also to share lessons learned

from the demonstration projects. NCRP will coordinate with CNRA, DOC, WRTC, CFSC, and Statewide Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Network staff to ensure statewide consistency of outreach methodologies, practices, and regional peer to peer training. NCRP will report to the Forest Management Task Force – Northern Regional Prioritization Group on all Program implementation progress and seek their input into the RPP.

Task 4: Planning and Permitting

The NCRP will facilitate project development and permitting to generate implementation-ready projects for funding consideration by a variety of grant programs. The NCRP staff and consultant team will evaluate needs and develop a process for the allocation of technical support. The process design will build on experience with similar projects and will be informed and reviewed by the NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee, NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors and the NCRP TPRC. The process will be approved by the CNRA and the NCRP PRP. Where efficiencies can be gained, the NCRP will compile existing permitting guidance and, as necessary, develop permitting protocols, templates, and guidance documents for each of the following example project types, as well as other projects identified in the regional and sub-regional RPPs:

- Forest fuels reduction
- Prescribed fire
- Ecosystem restoration
- Defensible space around structures
- Roadside fuels reduction
- Dead vegetation clearance

NCRP expects the work to be accomplished by the following entities using the solicitation process outlined above:

- Existing NCRP staff and consultants:
 - The Planning and Coordination Lead, WCW; the Tribal Coordinator, CIEA; and the Administration and Contracting Lead, HC – pre-project planning and permitting (including on Tribal lands) and coordination and dissemination of guidance and templates
- Forestry Consultant Team – planning and permitting
- NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors – technical assistance allocation process review and technical support for project planning and permitting

Task 5: Demonstration Projects

The NCRP will provide grants for demonstration projects that implement actions that maximize desired CNRA, DOC, and NCRP program outcomes. Projects may be selected based on the priorities of the RPP or on pre-existing project development and permitting processes with strong regional support, including review and approval by the NCRP technical review and advisory bodies listed above. The NCRP anticipates that these projects will be designed to test concepts, processes, and innovative techniques for fuel load reduction and

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forest health that can be quantified and scaled up in the region and elsewhere. Quantification is expected to include performance metrics that can be consistently applied across projects and will be developed in collaboration with experts from CAL FIRE, USFS, academic partners, WRTC, CNRA, DOC, CFSC, the CA Forest Management Task Force – Northern Region Prioritization Group and local experts, and NCRP committees.

Performance metrics may include the following, and are expected to be refined during the process of evaluating project benefits:

- Volume of biomass reduced
- Percent change in fuel loading/fire predictive variables (to be developed in collaboration with CAL FIRE, USFS, academic partners)
- Projected tons of CO₂e sequestered/emissions avoided
- Number of personnel trained
- Number of local jobs created/maintained
- Amount of local revenue generated
- New technologies tested
- Projected number of processing facilities sustained
- Megawatts of energy produced
- Health metrics associated with reduced exposure to smoke and other public health hazards
- Various water quality, climate and ecosystem service metrics

Sub-grants for demonstration projects will be allocated based on the project's ability to achieve the goals of fuel load reduction, long term forest and ecosystem health, local jobs and revenue, workforce development, support for local infrastructure, and capacity enhancement. Project evaluation criteria will include project readiness, the ability to model and share key practices, measurability, the testing of new and innovative methods and tools, and the ability of the project to be scaled up and applied to other areas in the region and state.

These demonstration projects – while focused on forest management and fuel load reduction – will be intentionally targeted to integrate with community preparedness and fire adapted community efforts funded by other sources. Projects that integrate with community wildfire adaptation efforts will receive additional points in the review and evaluation process.

Data, performance measures, and project outcomes/lessons learned will be documented and integrated into the RPP on an ongoing basis to ensure adaptive learning and information sharing from the demonstration projects.

The solicitation process for demonstration projects will build on the NCRP Project Selection Process Guidelines described above. The process will be informed and reviewed by the Forestry Consultant Team, the NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc Committee, NCRP Tribal and County Technical Forest Advisors, and the NCRP TPRC and approved by the CNRA and the NCRP PRP. The budgeted amount for sub-grants for demonstration projects

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includes funding for the NCRP staff and consultant team to administer the solicitation process, provide oversight of project implementation, and report on progress.

BUDGET TABLE

TASK	DESCRIPTION	CNRA-DOC FUNDS
1	Grant Administration and Project Management	\$190,000
2	Regional Priority Planning	\$950,000
3	Coordination, Outreach, Education	\$133,000
4	Planning and Permitting	\$910,000
5	Demonstration Projects	\$1,800,000
	<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$3,983,000</i>
	Indirect cost (1.35%)	\$54,500
	TOTAL	\$4,037,500