**Instructions:** Complete this form when seeking project support from the ACCG. Before completing this form, please review the ACCG Project Development & Support Process (link to [flowchart](https://acconsensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/01-Process-for-requesting-support-from-ACCG_1-31-20.pdf)) and ACCG Project Endorsement Guidelines (link to [guidelines](https://acconsensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/04-ACCG-Project-Endorsement-Guidelines_1-8-20-1.pdf)). Contact the ACCG Administrator with questions: Regine Miller, regine.chips@gmail.com.

1. Submission Date: *March 17, 2021 revised April 7, 2021*
2. Project Name: *Forest Projects Plan*
3. Organization/Entity Requesting Support: *Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority*
4. Project Proponent Contact (name, phone, and email address): *Karen Quidachay*
5. Committed Project Partners: *United States Forest Service (Amador RD and Calaveras RD)*
6. Grant Program (if applicable): *Applied for grant funding from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and CDFW*
7. Name and address to whom the Letter of Support from the ACCG should be addressed: *None requested at this time.*
8. Due Date for Letter of Support: *NA*
9. Project Budget Total Amount: *About $1 million*
10. Project Dollar Amount Being Requested through Grant Program (if applicable): *Sierra Nevada Conservancy = $200,000; CDFW =$472,252*
11. Has this project been presented to the ACCG before? If so, describe prior engagement with the ACCG about this project. *No the project has not yet been presented to the ACCG.*
12. Project Summary

Provide a summary of your project that describes:

1. the existing condition of the landscape, the purpose and need/ goals and objectives of the project, any planned work, the acreage and location of project activities.
2. how the project addresses the environmental, social, and local economic benefits of comprising the ACCG’s triple bottom-line mission. Specifically reference the ACCG’s Principles and Policies in your response. (link to [Principles and Policies document](https://acconsensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/03-ACCG-Principles-Policies_8-18-10.pdf)).
3. [Placeholder that will have applicants refer to forthcoming socioeconomic guidance document]
4. any actions that could cause controversy among ACCG members, indicating what category of controversy as clarified in the following document (link to [forest treatments guidance tool](https://acconsensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/05-ACCG-Project-Support-Evaluation-Tool_2-5-20.pdf)). How have you attempted to minimize controversy? What are some possible solutions you could employ to address ongoing controversy?

**Answer to a):** The proposed Forest Projects Plan is a landscape-level, NEPA/CEQA planning project located within the upper Mokelumne watershed on lands administered by the Calaveras Ranger District on the Stanislaus National Forest and the Amador Ranger District on the Eldorado National Forest. This initial phase of this project will focus on the highest priority fuels treatment areas using the SNC-funded GIS Mapping Tool to identify a minimum 10,000 acres for treatments with more areas included as budget permits. Depending on CEQA and whether or not the proposed project can fall under a CEQA Categorical Exemption, the project will be designed to prepare the forest landscape for subsequent prescribed burning treatments and to facilitate a forested landscape that is more resilient to drought and wildfire. The initial phase of the proposed project will include mutually agreeable forest restoration and understory fuels management treatments such as fuel breaks, ladder fuel treatment, mastication, forest thinning, and hand treatments within a minimum of 10,000+ acres. To the extent possible, the project is designed in areas already field-surveyed to minimize costs of the planning phase. The exact locations of unit boundaries have not yet been determined. This work will be completed once funding is received.

The urgent and overarching purpose of the proposed project is to reduce forest fuel loads, reduce forest ladder fuels, improve ecological resilience, protect water resources, and preserve water and other infrastructure facilities in the Mokelumne watershed. The project planning area encompasses portions of the Cornerstone Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) and includes federal and non-federal lands. It is important to note that this proposed planning initiative, and the associated NEPA/CEQA proposed action, must be completed before any significant future fuels treatments can be implemented in the upper Mokelumne watershed. In other words, there are few remaining NEPA/CEQA certified projects currently eligible for fuels treatment implementation on the NF in this watershed. It is therefore critical that UMRWA and others work as expeditiously as possible to vastly increase the areas where forest treatments can be conducted.

The fundamental goal of the initial phase of the Forest Projects Plan is to reduce the risk of devasting, catastrophic wildfires in the Upper Mokelumne River watershed on as many acres as possible and as quickly as possible. This goal will be achieved by implementing projects designed to reduce forest fuel loads and forest ladder fuels in strategically selected Calaveras NF and Eldorado NF locations in the shortest timeframe possible.

The Forest Projects Plan builds on the recently completed Mapping Tool Project developed by UMRWA, SNC, ACCG and the USFS. The Mapping Tool Project is a GIS-based prioritization tool that utilizes a wildfire risk assessment framework outlined in GTR-315 (Scott et al., 2013). This tool was utilized to identify and map the watershed’s natural resource assets most vulnerable to predicted future wildfire. Key outputs were “priority areas” for future forest fuel reduction treatments – essentially those geographic areas identified as being at greatest risk. Along with the priority areas identified by modeling, additional project areas were identified by accessing a project inventory database developed by the ACCG to track previously identified project and treatment areas. The resulting project planning areas are considered high priority for habitat protection and fuels treatments due to dense, overstocked, homogeneous forested conditions that are susceptible to mortality from drought, pests, pathogens, and catastrophic wildfire.

Forest Projects Plan – Phase 1 (SNC grant award anticipated June 2021)

Funding: SNC $200,000, UMRWA $50,000

Phase 1 of the Plan will distinguish those priority areas for fuels reduction treatments that can be addressed most readily given NEPA/CEQA considerations from those projects that require additional environmental and public review. Thus this phase will complete the initial steps of the NEPA/CEQA process, specifically the development of the proposed action through scoping and issues analysis. There will be two key outcomes from Phase 1: (1) two lists of projects: (a) projects projects that require minimal additional environmental documentation and processing (e.g., categorical exclusions/exemptions)and (b) projects that require further environmental analyses, documentation and public review; and (2) the proposed actions (NEPA Categorical Exclusions and CEQA Categorical/Statutory Exemptions) for those projects eligible for minimal further environmental review. Accordingly, eligibility determinations will be made by the applicable lead agencies (USFS for NEPA and UMRWA for CEQA).

The immediate operational objective of Phase 1 is to establish a list of action-ready projects that may be contracted by UMRWA or others for completion beginning in 2022. It is hoped that this list will include approximately 10,000 acres or more.

Forest Projects Plan – Phase 2

Funding: CDFW Proposition 1 grant $472,252 (requested) Other funding TBD.

Phase 2 of the Plan will complete the planning and environmental work for the list (b) projects identified in Phase 1. This will include the applicable field surveys, detailed environmental analyses, evaluation of alternatives, applicable environmental protection measures (i.e., design criteria) and related environmental reviews necessary to properly advance these projects to action-ready status. Critical to the success of this Phase 2 will be project and related environmental reviews by the ACCG and the public. The project work plan anticipates the use of a conflict resolution/professional facilitator to organize and conduct review meetings involving the ACCG and/or its Workgroups and others.

**Answer to b):** UMRWA’s contracting proceduresinclude a 5% advantage for Local Service Providers from Amador, Calaveras and Alpine Counties. This 5% preference is applied to the scoring evaluation of proposals submitted by qualified Local Service Providers: the initial sum total score is adjusted upward by 5% (for example, Local Service Provider proposal evaluation score of 80 would be increased 5% to 84%). UMRWA has a track record of hiring operators and contractors based in or near the Mokelumne watershed and who understand the unique environment and culture of the area. The creation of jobs and helping build the capacity of the local workforce to address ongoing fuels treatment issues in the watershed remains a key component of UMRWA’s mission and objectives.

The proposed project directly supports and facilitates all four of the following ACCG principles:

Principles:

• Design and implement activities that protect and restore forest ecosystem resiliency, structures, processes and functions within local watersheds.

• Seek forest and watershed planning solutions that benefit all three components of our vision: the local environment, community and economy.

• Use adaptive management best practices supported by the most appropriate peer-reviewed, ecology-based science available.

• Plan forest activities using the most comprehensive and current assessment of local watersheds and forests and the communities and economies they support.

The proposed project is designed to foster the following ACCG policies to guide operations:

Policies to Guide Operations:

Natural Resources

• Reduce the frequency and intensity of wildland fires that threaten life, property or important ecological resources.

• Protect watershed soil integrity and water quality and quantity.

• Identify, manage, and enhance wildlife and plant habitat.

• Plan and implement projects using a landscape perspective that recognizes their cumulative effects. • Prioritize and strategically target projects and treatment areas using the best assessment and the most appropriate adaptive management techniques available.

• Reduce forest fuel loads to manageable, ecologically sustainable levels using site appropriate methods: including but not limited to mechanical and/or prescribed burning methods.

• Establish and maintain monitoring and data collection activities that improve local knowledge of forest conditions from the stand to landscape and watershed levels.

 • Promote the adaptation of management strategies and methods using the best available peer-reviewed science-based research.

Communities

• Treat everyone with dignity and respect, being mindful of their respective roles and responsibilities. • Reduce the potential for damage to life and property by:

• Promoting the creation and maintenance of fire-safe communities through community endorsed fuel hazard reduction projects.

• Respect and be sensitive to Native American cultural sites, practices and resources.

• Respect and be sensitive to historical sites.

• Include area stakeholders in project planning and implementation.

• Foster cooperative partnerships that maximize effectiveness and regional competitiveness of the local workforce and businesses.

• As appropriate, provide community education and involvement opportunities to local communities. • Protect scenic beauty and locally important sites.

• Enhance or do no harm to other healthy forest-based activities. Economies • Work to create local sustainable jobs with livable wages.

Economy

• Work to diversify the local economy with sustainable jobs and businesses.

• Implement and use adaptive management and sustainable practices in forest and watershed work. • Practice continuous quality improvement in the work done to learn from it and improve future work.

• Encourage local investment, purchasing and ownership of forest enterprises. Use regional networks and markets to optimize local benefits.

**Answer to c):** TBD.

**Answer to d):** In accordance with the forest treatment guidance tool, this project is considered primarily mutually agreeable. However, there may be some mechanical thinning treatments proposed at a later time depending on field analyses, which are considered mostly agreeable. The proposed project will involve consultation with the ACCG and detailed analyses using the mapping tool. The project will be designed to include primarily mutually agreeable forest restoration and understory fuels management treatments such as fuel breaks, mastication, and, where necessary, hand treatments within a minimum of 10,000+ acres. Based on the ACCG *Proposed Forest Treatments Guidance Document*, it is generally agreed that these types of fuels reduction treatments are mutually to mostly agreeable and are known to have beneficial effects on fire intensity, severity and the overall hydrologic function within a watershed. The goals and expected outcomes of the planning phase of the project are to prepare the foundation for subsequent phases such as ground-truthing and flagging unit boundaries, field studies and analyses. The project will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Environmental Quality Act and other federal and State laws and regulations such as the Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act.

1. Describe desired outcomes/future conditions that the project achieves/supports.

The proposed planning project will facilitate the completion of a NEPA/CEQA compliant landscape-scale fuel treatments and forest restoration program (the Forest Projects Plan) for the Upper Mokelumne River watershed. The completed Forest Projects provide implementation-ready fuels treatment projects designed to reduce wildfire risks, protect watersheds and important species, and habitats including tributaries to water storage facilities. The proposed planning project will also design projects to restore and release headwater aspen stands and meadows from conifer encroachment thereby helping to ensure water quality protection in source watersheds. Implementation of projects in the Forest Projects Plan will also restore watershed health and improve watershed storage capacity, protect forest health, life and property, and reduce risk for potential greenhouse gas emissions resulting from wildfire.

1. Describe status of environmental documentation (NEPA/CEQA/other).

See above. This is a NEPA/CEQA planning proposal.

1. Attach project map and any other supporting documentation that would enhance the ACCG’s understanding of the project.