

# Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)

ACCG Request for Project Support Submission Form

(version: October 14, 2022)

**Instructions:** Complete this form when seeking project development engagement or support from the ACCG. Before completing this form, please review the ACCG Project Development & Support Process (see [flowchart](#)) and ACCG Project Endorsement Guidelines (see [guidelines](#)). Contact the Administrator with questions.

1. Submission Date: October 15, 2025
2. Project Name: Amador Aspen Restoration Project
3. Organization/Entity Requesting Support: Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority
4. Project Proponent Contact (name, phone, and email address): Richard Sykes, Executive Officer, (510) 390-4035, rsykes@umrwa.org
5. Committed Project Partners: Amador Ranger District, Eldorado National Forest; UMRWA, which is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) comprised of six water agencies including Amador Water Agency, Calaveras County Water District, Calaveras Public Utility District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, Jackson Valley Irrigation District, and Alpine County Water Agency and three counties including Alpine, Amador and Calaveras.
6. Grant Program (if applicable) or Prospective Funding Sources:
  - Wildlife Conservation Board Forest Conservation Program
  - Sierra Nevada Conservancy Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Program
  - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation California Forests and Watersheds Program
  - CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant Program
7. Name and address to whom the Letter of Support from the ACCG should be addressed:  
  
David Fournier  
Forest Supervisor  
Eldorado National Forest  
100 Forni Road  
Placerville, California  
95667
8. Due Date for Letter of Support: December 1, 2025
9. Project Budget Total Amount: Estimated costs for: NEPA \$649,400, project implementation \$3.5 million, and post-restoration monitoring \$125,000.
10. Project Dollar Amount Being Requested through Grant Program (if applicable): Not applicable.

11. Has this project been presented to the ACCG before? If so, describe prior engagement with the ACCG about this project.

- October 12, 2022 – MWG Discussion
- November 9, 2022 – MWG Discussion
- March 8, 2023 – MWG Presentation and Discussion
- May 10, 2023 – MWG Presentation and Discussion
- June 23, 2023 – General Meeting Presentation
- April 24, 2024 – PWG Presentation and Discussion
- May 22, 2024 – PWG Discussion
- August 28, 2024 – PWG Presentation and Discussion

12. Project Details

a) Describe the specific location of the project, the existing condition of the landscape, the project’s purpose and need/ goals and objectives, the work that will be performed and the project acreage.

The Amador Aspen Restoration Project (the project) will restore five clusters of aspen stands, totaling up to 604 acres of aspen, by removing encroaching and overtopping conifers, selectively girdling conifers where it is not practical or feasible to remove cut conifers, installing temporary fencing, and implementing prescribed fire treatments. The project also will erect temporary fencing generally around individual or small groups of aspen suckers within an additional 124 acres of aspen that are heavily browsed, for a total proposed project area of up to 728 acres. The project was designed by the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority (UMRWA) in cooperation with the Eldorado National Forest, Amador Ranger District (ARD) and the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG).

The project objectives are to reestablish historic aspen stands and promote regeneration and sustainability of aspen stands that are currently either, limited in age classes, suppressed, stunted, or declining in acreage, or a combination of these conditions due to conifer encroachment, overtopping, intense herbivory, and suppression of wildfire.

The project’s aspen stands are situated entirely within National Forest System lands administered by ARD within El Dorado, Alpine, and Amador Counties. The project is southwest of Lake Tahoe and east of Jackson, in the vicinity of the Highway 88 corridor at the headwaters of the Mokelumne, Cosumnes and South Fork American Rivers. The aspen stands proposed for conifer cutting and removal, girdling, and prescribed fire treatments are situated above 7,000 feet elevation. Temporary fencing is proposed for aspen stands above and below 7,000 feet elevation.

Aspen are a keystone species and a critical component of a thriving forest ecosystem in the Sierra Nevada. Aspen stands support a high number of plant and animal species, especially when compared to associated coniferous forests of the west (USDA Forest Service 2021). Aspen forests are characterized by moist habitat even when surrounding vegetation is relatively dry; serving an ecological function similar to a desert oasis but within the high elevations of the Sierra Nevada. Aspen forests are beautiful, providing an ecotourism attraction, and are exceptionally resilient to wildfire, often providing a critical sanctuary during fire suppression and influencing the way fire moves across the landscape (Fechner and Barrows 1976, Nesbit et al. 2023, Harris et al. 2025).

Within the Mokelumne River watershed, aspen stands have experienced extensive conifer encroachment due to historic fire suppression, drought, and lack of vegetation treatment, while simultaneously experiencing large-scale wildfires over the past two decades. Taken together, these factors have led to a decrease in aspen regeneration and stand condition, affecting the distinct wildlife and plant species that are associated with this habitat type.

The 728 acres proposed for restoration under this project were evaluated as part of a larger, detailed, watershed-wide mapping and condition assessment of aspen stands across the Upper Mokelumne and adjacent areas of the upper South Fork American and Cosumnes River watersheds. The in-field mapping and conditions assessment was initiated in August 2022 and completed in October 2024. This in-field assessment identifies and maps existing stands, assesses their condition, prioritizes stands for restoration, and recommends treatment methods.

As described further in the Decision Memo, the purpose of the Proposed Action is to reestablish historic aspen stands by:

- Promoting the expansion of aspen stands and protecting important wildlife habitat provided by them.
- Promoting long-term health, resilience, and sustainability of aspen stands thereby reducing the risk of high severity wildfire.

b) Describe the local Environmental benefits of your project. Please reference the *ACCG Principles and Policies* in your response (See [Principles and Policies document](#)).

Project implementation will reestablish the historic aspen stand edge, enhance stand function, increase the number of age classes, and promote aspen growth. Vegetation treatments, temporary livestock and deer exclusion fencing, and prescribed burning will serve to meet the project's ecological restoration objectives and increase forest resilience.

Project implementation will provide multiple environmental benefits including, but not limited to:

- Restoring a keystone species. Aspen support a high number of plant and animal species, especially when compared to associated coniferous forests of the west (USDA Forest Service 2021). Aspen restoration will improve existing and potentially create new wildlife habitat through regeneration and expansion of aspen and their associated plant communities.
- Reducing risk of high intensity fire and extent. Aspen stands are a mesic vegetation community and resilient to wildfire, often providing a critical sanctuary during fire suppression and influencing the way fire moves across the landscape (Fechner and Barrows 1976, Nesbit et al. 2023, Harris et al. 2025).
- Providing an ecotourism attraction.

These project benefits are in line with the ACCG Guiding Principles which state:

- Design and implement activities that protect and restore forest ecosystem resiliency, structures, processes and functions within local watersheds.
- Plan forest activities using the most comprehensive and current assessment of local watersheds and forests and the communities and economies they support.

The project treatments were designed to decrease conifer encroachment and overtopping, reduce surface fuels, increase stand exposure to sunlight, and protect aspen saplings from heavy browse to restore and expand aspen stands, thus enhancing wildlife and plant habitat and protecting aspen stands from extirpation.

The project benefits are consistent with the ACCG's Policies to Guide Operations which states:

- Reduce the frequency and intensity of wildland fires that threaten life, property or important ecological resources.
- Identify, manage, and enhance wildlife and plant habitat and wildlife corridor connectivity.
- 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.
- Include area stakeholders in project planning and implementation.
- Protect scenic beauty and locally important sites.

c) Indicate with an X which of the following local Community and Economic benefits your project will provide ( See [Principles and Policies document](#)). The following checklist is intended to help ACCG members understand the community and economic benefits of individual projects and to provide opportunities for dialogue aimed at enhancing and promoting such benefits, when possible. Please check all boxes that you believe apply to some extent.

- Provides local, sustainable jobs with fair compensation.*
- Supports and strengthens locally-owned businesses.*
- Includes bid preference for local contractors. Local refers to those areas within the ACCG planning area boundary which generally align with Amador and Calaveras counties and Alpine County. It also refers to those adjacent foothill counties of El Dorado and Tuolumne. Regional refers to the broader Sierra Nevada and foothills.*
- Supports local investment, purchasing and ownership of forest enterprises.*
- Includes job training and/or certification opportunities.*
- Provides local community education and engagement opportunities.*
- Reduces potential damage to life and property by promoting the creation and maintenance of fire-safe communities.*
- Protects critical infrastructure and uses such as water and power, roads, sewer, communications, etc.*
- Enhances or protects drinking water quality.*
- Enhances or protects healthy forest-based activities such as recreation, hunting, and fishing, etc.*
- Creates or expands uses or local markets for "underutilized" forest products (i.e., biomass, firewood, mushroom foraging, etc.).*
- Uses local and regional networks and markets to optimize local benefits (e.g., firewood sold locally in stores and distributed to those in need, Christmas trees, fiber board & wood-shaving facilities, etc.).*
- Includes community engagement and education in planning and implementation.*

- If cultural resources present, engages tribal representatives early and consistently from conceptual planning through implementation and monitoring to ensure respect and sensitivity to Native American cultural sites, practices, resources.*
- Protects historical or locally important sites.*
- Protects and/or enhances scenic beauty.*
- Incorporates cooperative partnerships that increase effectiveness and local competitiveness.*
- Includes an assessment of community and economic benefits.*

d) Use this space to further describe and quantify the Community and Economic benefits of your project or to provide more information to help others understand its benefits.

Implementation of aspen restoration treatments may be conducted by local forest contractors resulting in local economic benefits. Under UMRWA procurement rules, operators are afforded a preference when proposing to perform treatment work contracted by UMRWA. UMRWA's procurement policy provides a 5 percent scoring advantage to local operators/contractors located in Alpine, Amador or Calaveras Counties. UMRWA hopes to expand the capacity of forest restoration in the local region and contribute to the local economy to while complying with State public contracting laws and regulations.

Project implementation will enhance aspen stands within the upper Mokelumne River watershed and expand opportunities for scenic beauty, aspen viewing, and ecotourism. A considerable portion of the mapped stand are in the vicinity of the Carson Pass Management Area within the Mokelumne Wilderness with additional mapped stands to be restored in Martin Meadow and north of Silver Lake. Restoration of these aspen stands is expected to enhance the community and broader public's outdoor recreation experience.

e) If your proposed project is primarily designed to achieve environmental goals, what are some ways your project has been adapted or could be adapted in the future to enhance Community and Economic benefits, if appropriate?

UMRWA provides a scoring advantage to forest operators and contractors who are located in Amador, Alpine or Calaveras Counties. UMRWA's hiring of local forestry contractors supports local job development and vending both of which contribute to the local economy.

f) Describe any actions that would benefit from additional discussion with ACCG members about the project design, indicating the topic(s) in the following document (link to Forest Treatment Guidance document). Have you attempted to resolve any issues with ACCG members? What are some possible solutions you could employ to address ongoing issues?

There are no outstanding actions that require additional discussion with ACCG members. UMRWA worked closely with the ARD as well as the ACCG to develop the project, its treatment specifications and design criteria.

UMRWA considers ACCG a critical partner in this effort and intends to report to ACCG throughout project implementation, including future post-restoration aspen stand monitoring.

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

The project area consists of degraded aspen stands and their buffer areas which have experienced extensive conifer encroachment and overtopping due to historic fire suppression, drought, and lack of vegetation treatment. Some of the stands have experienced high intensity wildfires, including the 2021 Caldor Fire. Combined, these factors have led to a decrease in aspen regeneration and stand condition with stands exhibiting limited age classes, suppressed, stunted, or declining acreage, or a combination of these conditions.

The project includes removing encroaching and overtopping conifer trees, reducing surface fuels, installing temporary fencing around individual or small groups of aspen suckers, and applying prescribed fire in suitable stands, adjacent to where fire is occurring in conifer stands. These actions will reduce fuel loading and continuity, decrease competition for resources including water, nutrients, and sunlight, and decrease browse pressure.

As a result, aspen stands will experience improved health, size expansion, and age-class diversification. The project will also lower the risk and extent of high-intensity wildfire within aspen stands and adjacent conifer stands. In addition, it will enhance habitat for both plants and wildlife, benefiting flowering plants, the western bumble bee, nesting and foraging northern goshawks, and providing improved fawning habitat for deer.

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

The NEPA Decision Memo is tentatively scheduled for signature no later than December 13, 2025 . This will not occur without the support of ACCG. The CEQA process is scheduled for consideration at the UMRWA board meeting on January 23, 2025. A statutory CEQA exemption using AB 211 and/or a CEQA categorical exemption Class 4 Minor Alterations to Land or Class 7 Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment are anticipated.

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

Refer to NEPA Decision Memo and project area maps.