

## **Request for Proposals**

### **Kaiser East Restoration Project Decision Memo**

### **Sierra National Forest, California**

**Background and Statement of Work:** The Sierra National Forest (SNF) High Sierra Ranger District in partnership with the National Forest Foundation (NFF) will work with a contractor to complete the production of a Decision Memo on the Kaiser East Restoration Project (DM & Supporting Documentation Reports) in accordance with the Forest Service's most recent NEPA Handbook and in compliance with the SNF 2023 land management plan (LMP). The Contractor shall develop a Final Proposed Action to achieve the Purpose and Need of the Kaiser East Restoration Project that addresses required design features intended to mitigate any significant effects and ensure Forest Plan compliance. The analysis, spanning from finalizing the Proposed Action to completing the Decision Memo, will identify and evaluate all relevant impacts, conditions, and issues resulting from the Proposed Action. Actions associated with the Project such as tree thinning, haul routes, hazard tree removal, water drafting, etc., will be assessed within the Proposed Action.

#### **Information Requested**

If interested in submitting a bid for this project, please provide a proposal for the above statement of work by providing:

- technical approach
- work experience
- cost
- capacity for this project
- experience in similar projects

Specific requirements are detailed below.

## **I. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS**

#### **General Specifications**

- (a) Description of Work – This Request for Proposals is for restoration services related to NEPA compliance reporting pertaining to the production of a Proposed Action plan and DM for the Green Tree Restoration Project(s), including the following:

1. Task 1) Attend and Participate in Kick-Off Meeting (Meeting with IDT); Progress Meetings/Conference Calls: Appropriate personnel from the Contractor's staff will participate in an initiation meeting to be hosted by the Forest Service upon

receipt of the Notice To Proceed (NTP). The Contractor will, in consultation with the Forest Service (FS) and National Forest Foundation (NFF), schedule and conduct progress review meetings. Meetings should include weekly conference calls (1/2-2 hours) and location meetings at critical points within the planning schedule.

2. Task 2) Finalize the Proposed Action: The Forest Service shall provide a preliminary Proposed Action with general conservation measures to the Contractor. The Contractor shall finalize the Proposed Action to ensure that it responds to the Purpose and Need and complies with the Line Officer's direction.
3. Task 3) Management and Disposition of Scoping Comments: Scoping has already been done for this project. The Contractor will evaluate scoping comments in their analysis reports and identify issues for Responsible Official approval. Proposals for addressing issues, as applicable, in the DM should be developed for FS consideration.
4. Task 4) Resources Inventory and Opportunities Constraints: The Contractor shall compile a complete inventory of existing resources, facilities, and conditions needed to perform the required environmental analysis of the Project. The Contractor shall be responsible for collecting and reviewing the 2023 LMP, public scoping comments, GIS compiled data, and any other studies, reports, and plans including those developed by county, state, and other federal agencies that are related to or affect the Project.
5. Task 5) Interagency Consultation, Coordination, Documentation, and Data Compilation: The Contractor shall include drafting documents to be used in consultation with agencies and tribes throughout the coordination process. The Contractor shall track progress and support FS consultation/coordination with agencies to obtain agency-provided data or concurrence in a timely manner.
6. Task 6) Conduct Required Environmental Analyses and Prepare DM to Comply with NEPA: The Contractor shall conduct all necessary analyses in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies and to provide the background information for the DM. The Contractor shall gather information and use the information/data furnished by the Forest Service and/or the cooperating agencies to prepare narratives documenting baseline environmental and socio-economic conditions.
7. Task 7) Finalize the DM for Review by the Forest Service: After incorporating the Forest Service recommended changes, the Contractor shall provide the Final DM in Word format for Forest Service approval.
8. Task 8) Prepare DM for Distribution: The Contractor shall be responsible for distribution of the Final DM to the scoping commenters emailing list
9. Task 9) Maintain and Provide Project Record: The Contractor shall prepare and assemble a Project Record including all information and analyses either generated or obtained from other sources or used to support documentation and analyses.

The Contractor shall identify what they can supply in terms of materials, labor, equipment, supplies, supervision, quality control, and incidentals required to complete the work described. The Contractor shall perform all work in a safe and conscientious manner.

- (b) Project Location – The Project is located at high elevation above Huntington Lake on the High Sierra Ranger District in Fresno County. As laid out in Appendix C – Project Map. Approximate location of treatment areas within this larger Project area will be determined by the Forest Service during the early 2024 field season. Preliminary treatment area maps shall be prepared prior to the kick-off meeting. Areas included for evaluation of environmental effects/determination of extraordinary circumstances shall be determined by the Contractor and shall be clearly bounded in time and space.
- (c) Work Schedule – Work on the Project shall begin in April 2024. Contractors may work 6 days a week, up to 12 hour days. The project shall be completed no later than December 23, 2024.

### **Other Project Requirements and Specifications**

- I. Utilities – In many locations there will be no or limited sanitation, water, electrical or housing services available. The Contractor shall make its own arrangements for temporary facilities if needed.
- (b) Specifications – Project work shall be accomplished in accordance with the following:
  - Appendix E - Scope of Work
  - Appendix D - Supporting Information

### **Insurance Requirements**

Upon selection of the winning bid, the Contractor agrees that it has and shall maintain the following insurance coverage indicated below. The effective date of all coverage shall precede the start of any work.

- a. State minimum workers' compensation insurance coverage for its employees, if any.
- b. Broad form general liability, property damage, and automotive liability insurance in the minimum amount of \$1,000,000 for bodily injury, death, or damage to property of any person and \$2,000,000 for bodily injury, death, or damage to property of more than one person. The Contractor shall name NFF an Additional Named Insured and provide NFF with a certificate of insurance evidencing such coverages, prior to the initiation of the Scope of Services.
- c. If the Scope of Services includes professional services as identified herein, Contractor shall also provide professional errors and omissions liability insurance. Professional services for purposes of this section include, but are not limited to performing architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, land surveying or planning, preparation and signing or stamping of drawings, maps, surveys or construction specifications, or design and development of computer software, programs or websites by the Contractor or by subcontractors on behalf of the Contractor, for which professional liability insurance would typically be required. The

minimum coverage limits required are \$1,000,000 for each claim and \$1,000,000 annual aggregate.

### **Prohibited Telecommunications Services and Equipment**

The Contractor is responsible for compliance with the prohibition on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment identified in 2 CFR 200.216.

### **Payment/Performance Security**

Contractor shall post cash, a letter of credit, bond, or other financial security that is easily convertible into cash in a form acceptable to the NFF, in its sole determination, to assure completion of the work required under any subsequent agreement and payment of all amounts lawfully due to all persons supplying or furnishing to the Contractor or Contractor's subcontractors with labor, laborers, materials, rental machinery, tools or equipment used or to perform the work. Contractor may incorporate required associated costs into mobilization costs or other approved expenses.

- a. Work that is classified as construction in accordance with the Miller Act or Little Miller Act or if required per conditions of the funding source, payment and performance bonding will be required in the full amount of any Agreement. For the purposes of this Request for Proposal, construction is defined as "any contract greater than \$100,000 for the construction, alteration, or repair of any public building or public work where the federal government is the owner", or
- b. If Contractor is not self-performing at least 85% of the total contract value or if the cost of materials is in excess of the larger of \$100,000 or 50% of the contract total, payment and performance bonding will be required in the full amount of the agreement, or
- c. If the value of the agreement is in excess of \$250,000, Contractor will be required to post financial security in a form acceptable to the NFF in the amount of 5% of the total agreement value up to \$250,000 in total financial security.

**American Made Products.** The work associated with this RFP is subject to Build America, Buy America Act. P.L. 117-58, Secs 70911-70917, and as such, domestic content procurement preference requires all iron and steel, manufactured products and construction materials used within the scope of this Agreement, be produced in the United States.

### **Federal Exclusion Verification**

The selected Contractor will be required to affirm that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.

### **Federal Flowdown Provisions**

Flowdown Requirements: Any Agreement associated with this RFP may be subject to flowdown requirements under associated federal or state funding agreements, which are included and

made part of by this reference.

## II. REQUIRED COMPONENTS

### Technical Proposal

Please provide a detailed technical approach to the work.

### Contractor Qualifications

- I. Past Experience – Please provide a brief explanation of previous work experience with land management agencies.
- II. References – Please provide three professional references that can speak to past performance.

### Pricing Schedule

Contractor shall price work according to the schedule below. Prevailing wages are required per conditions of funding sources.

	Task/Item	Units	Unit Cost	Extended Cost
(a)	Task 1: Meetings/Progress Reports	Hours		
(b)	Task 2: Final Proposed Action Development	Hours		
(c)	Task 3-5: Research Compilation/Documentation of Relevant Data, Information, Impacts, and Interagency Cooperation	Hours		
(d)	Task 6: NEPA Analysis Reporting/DM Drafting	Hours		
(e)	Task 7-8: Final DM Preparation and Distribution	Hours		
(f)	Task 9: Project Record Reporting	Hours		
			<b>Total Bid</b>	

### III. SUBMISSION, EVALUATION, AND CONTACTS

#### Contractor Selection Process

This is a request for proposals only and bids furnished are not offers from the National Forest Foundation. This request does not commit the National Forest Foundation to pay any costs incurred in the preparation or submission of the proposal or to contract for supplies or services.

The NFF will use the Evaluation Factors below to review each submitted bid. Based on the outcomes of that selection process, the NFF will notify successful and unsuccessful bidders by April 18, 2024, and will prepare a separate contract document.

#### Evaluation Factors and Relative Importance

The following criteria will be used in the evaluation of submitted proposals, ordered from highest weighting (level 3) to lowest weighting (level 1).

##### Level 3 Criteria

- Price / cost
- Equipment and contractor capability
- Timing of when contractor can begin and/or finish the project
- Past performance, references, and USFS feedback

##### Level 2 Criteria

- Technical proposal / proposed approach to project
- Overall strategic benefits to meeting NFF goals and grant needs, requirements, and timelines

##### Level 1 Criteria

- Benefits to the local community
- Relationship to local community

#### Point of Contact

Please submit any questions about the project in writing to the Point of Contact.

Jack Sieber

National Forest Foundation, California Program Coordinator – Southern Sierra  
jsieber@nationalforests.org

Responses will be shared with known interested parties by email or otherwise posted at <https://www.nationalforests.org/rfp>.

#### Bid Submission

Submit bids via email to jsieber@nationalforests.org by April 4, 2024.

**Equal Opportunity Provider**

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, the National Forest Foundation is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability.

Kaiser East Project Area  
High Sierra Ranger District  
Sierra National Forest

Appendix C  
Project Map

**Legend**

Streams

Road

<all other values>

MAINT\_LEVEL

<Null>

0 - NOT MAINTAINED

1 - BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)

2 - HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES

3 - SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CARS

4 - MODERATE DEGREE OF USER COMFORT

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

- Commercially Viable Conifer Volume (>20,000 bdf/ac)
- Treatment Area
- Creek Fire Perimeter
- Private Ownership
- Special Interest and Experimental Areas
- USFS Wilderness
- Roadless Area
- Major Reservoirs
- District Boundary
- Sierra NF Boundary

## **Appendix D**

### **Supporting Information**

#### **PLACE/PERIOD of PERFORMANCE**

The work tasks required to be performed on site will occur in the Project area. The work described in this SOW will be conducted from the Declaration of Acceptance through the ensuing 10 months.

#### **KEY PERSONNEL**

(a) The Contractor shall assign to this contract the following key personnel: Botanist, Terrestrial Wildlife Biologist, Aquatics Biologist, Archaeologist, Hydrologist, Silviculturist, Inventoried Roadless Specialist supported by the Team Leader, GIS Specialist and Writer/Editor.

(b) During the first ninety (90) days of performance, the Contractor shall make no substitutions of key personnel unless the substitution is necessitated by illness, death, or termination of employment. The Contractor shall notify the Contracting Officer within 15 calendar days after the occurrence of any of these events and provide the information required by paragraph (c) below. After the initial 90-day period, the Contractor shall submit the information required by paragraph (c) to the Contracting Officer at least 15 days prior to making any permanent substitutions.

(c) The Contractor shall provide a detailed explanation of the circumstances necessitating the proposed substitutions, complete resumes for the proposed substitutions, and any additional information requested by the Contracting Officer. Proposed substitutes should have comparable qualifications to those of the persons being replaced. The Contracting Officer will notify the Contractor within 15 calendar days after receipt of all required information of the decision on substitutions. The contract will be modified to reflect any approved changes of key personnel.

#### **REPORTING DELIVERABLES**

All work under this contract shall be the property of Forest Service and shall be delivered to the NFF COR prior to final Payment. All provided documents shall adhere to FS standards and templates outlined in this SOW. The Contractor shall establish a consistent editorial policy for all technical reports to promote brevity, clarity and precision in reporting. Technical language shall be used only when needed to prevent confusion. Extensive descriptive material may be placed in appendices if it does not contribute to the flow of presentation in the main body of a report.

*Progress Reports and Draft Documents:* Progress reports shall be submitted with billing (invoice), or at a minimum of every month, and shall outline the accomplishments of the Contractor during the preceding period. Reports shall cover work completed and in progress, provide accomplishments regarding identified goals, and shall identify problems which have

surfaced that could potentially affect the Project. The Project shall be tracked in such a way that the Contractor can answer the question of the percentage of work completed and the percentage of the budget that has been spent to complete that work (i.e. 50% of tasks complete and 45% funding spent). The Contractor shall provide written notification to the NFF COR requesting revisions to the scope of the SOW, schedule, and/or deliverables as needed. Any delay in the schedule shall be reported immediately upon recognition to the NFF COR. Draft reports are manuscripts in a form that may require significant editing and revisions. The draft and Final DM documents shall be submitted to the Forest Service in accordance with the timeline schedule for review and comment as described in the Outline of Work section.

*Review Procedures:* For reports or sections of reports subject to agency review, the Contractor shall submit a Word version of the report or place it in a shared folder as directed by the FS. The Forest Service shall review the report for clarity, compliance with the contract, documentation, and adherence to standards of the profession and shall respond with written comments to the Contractor within 15 calendar days. The Contractor shall address and/or incorporate these comments into the final report and shall submit the final report to Forest Service within 5 calendar days after Forest Service's comments are returned to the Contractor. Review conferences may be held at appropriate stages during the review process to discuss comments and necessary changes. In the event of a difference of opinion between the Contractor and Forest Service, Forest Service reserves the right to make the final decision.

*Photographs:* Images included in any project documentation may be in JPEG, PNG, or PDF file format. Images may not exceed 2MB (megabytes). Images may be compressed for file sharing, however, should maintain image quality.

*GIS Exhibits:* Specifications and Spatial Data Standards for Geospatial Data and Related Deliverables. All deliverables shall comply with applicable international, national and Federal information technology and geographic information standards, particularly those determined by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) as supporting the National Spatial Data Infrastructure. All data collected will meet the requirements of the Geospatial Data Act of 2018 where applicable. This will always include the documentation of all relevant metadata standards, use of standard data formats, description of quantitative measures of uncertainty and sources of uncertainty associated with the data. Additionally, the data must meet specific standards specified elsewhere to ensure the data is useful to support USDA's mission. Failure to comply with the official policy on spatial data, as set forth in three Office of Management and Budget Circulars (OMB A-16, OMB A-119, and OMB A-130) and by presidential Executive Order 12906 shall not be acceptable, and payment for work incurred shall not be forth coming until these requirements are met.

GIS data analyzed and produced throughout the duration of the Project will include the following information:

- Accuracy: Forest Service shall specify methods, test design, and reporting requirements consistent with FGDC Standard that the Contractor shall use to evaluate and report positional accuracy produced through this procurement. The National Standard for Spatial Data Accuracy is downloadable from: [National Standard for Spatial Data](#)

[Accuracy \(fgdc.gov\)](http://www.fgdc.gov). Accuracy statements reported by the Contractor shall be completely and thoroughly substantiated by providing full disclosure in the form of metadata. The Contractor shall ensure that the metadata is compliant with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Standard Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata, FGDC-STD-001-1998. This document can be downloaded from: <http://www.fgdc.gov/metadata>

- Documentation/Metadata: Metadata, or information describing the geospatial data, shall be included for all data layers. The National Standard for Spatial Data Accuracy is downloadable from: [National Standard for Spatial Data Accuracy \(fgdc.gov\)](http://www.fgdc.gov/metadata). All metadata shall be compliant with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Standard Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Metadata, FGDC-STD-001-1998. This document can be downloaded from: <http://www.fgdc.gov/metadata>. Geospatial databases and metadata received from the Contractor shall, at Forest Service discretion, be subject to inspection prior to acceptance. Forest Service shall notify the Contractor of any rejected geospatial databases and/or metadata within 60 days, to be returned to the Contractor for correction and returned to Forest Service within 90 days from the rejection notification date. Forest Service shall make payment to the Contractor upon final acceptance of the metadata. Metadata received from the Contractor shall be delivered in the same delivered package as the data.
- Security/Privacy: The Contractor shall provide full disclosure regarding any security/privacy concerns of all data that is delivered to Forest Service. This shall be fully documented in the metadata in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Standard Content Standards for Digital Geospatial Metadata, FGDC-STD-001-1998.
- Data Delivery Format: All data collected or generated by the Contractor during the preparation of documents will be included with the Final DM and supporting documentation. The data should be delivered in digital format that is directly readable by the Forest Service. Any geospatial data shall be geospatially referenced. Formats not readable will be returned to the Contractor for correction.

## APPLICABLE RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

For links to applicable laws, regulations, and policies go to:  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/regulations-policies>

Other useful links may be found at:

- National Environmental Policy Act:
  - <https://www.epa.gov/nepa>
  - <http://www.nepa.gov>
  - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/emc/nepa/>
  - [https://www.fs.usda.gov/emc/nepa/nepa\\_procedures/](https://www.fs.usda.gov/emc/nepa/nepa_procedures/)
  - <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-36/chapter-II/part-220>
- President's Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations outlined in 40 CFR parts 1500 – 1508, hereafter referred to as the CEQ regulations:
  - <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-V>

- Forest Service Procedures for Implementing CEQ Regulations, Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.15):
  - [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3826583.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3826583.pdf)
- National Forest Management Act:
  - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/emc/nfma/>
- Laws and Regulations: <http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/>
  - Clean Air Act: <http://www.epa.gov/air/caa>
  - Clean Water Act: <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act>
  - Endangered Species Act: <https://www.fws.gov/media/endangered-species-act>
  - Magnuson-Stevens Act: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/magnuson-stevens-fishery-conservation-and-management-act>
  - National Historic Preservation Act: [https://www.achp.gov/USFS/Historic\\_Preservation\\_Resources](https://www.achp.gov/USFS/Historic_Preservation_Resources)
  - Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations: <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-executive-order-12898-federal-actions-address-environmental-justice>
  - USDA Forest Service DM Template: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/nepa/nepa\\_templates/DMtemplate.docx](https://www.fs.usda.gov/nepa/nepa_templates/DMtemplate.docx)
- Sierra National Forest Planning:
  - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/sierra/landmanagement/planning>
- Sierra National Forest Land Management Plan:
  - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/sierra/?project=3375>
- Forest Service Manuals and Direction:
  - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/im/directives/>
- Climate Change Direction:
  - Climate Change Policy and Initiatives: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/sc/policy-initiatives#:~:text=On%20April%2022%2C%202022%2C%20President,sector%2C%20and%20develop%20policies%20to>
  - White House, Executive Order: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/04/22/executive-order-on-strengthening-the-nations-forests-communities-and-local-economies/>
  - Climate Resilience and Carbon Stewardship of America's National Forests and Grasslands: <https://www.usda.gov/directives/sm-1077-004>
- Climate Change Tools:

- CEQA National Environmental Policy Act Guidance on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change:  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/09/2023-00158/national-environmental-policy-act-guidance-on-consideration-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-climate>
- Forest Service Climate Risk Viewer:  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/87744e6b06c74e82916b9b11da218d28?item=2>
- Forest Service Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan:  
[https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/4\\_NRE\\_FS\\_ClimateAdaptationPlan\\_2022.pdf](https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/4_NRE_FS_ClimateAdaptationPlan_2022.pdf)
- Forest Service Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments Across the Nation:  
<https://usfs.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=f09164baef5d47d3ad728deaa1a28e7b>

## DEFINITIONS

**-ID Team (IDT):** An Interdisciplinary Team of Specialists, dictated by the issues and work at hand, to meet the Resource Standards and Deliverables and conduct the analysis.

**-Resource Standards and Deliverables:** Specific documents that will be used and/or provided by the Contractor to support the analysis and the NEPA decision and that meet the requirements of law, regulation, and policy.

# **Statement of Work for the Kaiser East Restoration Project DM Preliminary Proposed Action to Decision**

## **I. Overview**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Statement of Work (SOW) outlines the analysis and documentation for the Kaiser East Restoration Project (the Project) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) proposed by the Sierra National Forest Service, High Sierra Ranger District with the final Decision Memo (DM) to be completed for the Sierra National Forest Supervisor's signature by January 31, 2025.

The Project, situated in the Sierra National Forest (SNF), requires the completion of the DM and organization of the Project record to ensure compliance with environmental laws and executive orders. The Kaiser East Restoration Project aims to treat approximately 4,500 acres within a 11,000 acre project footprint east of Huntington Lake between the Kaiser and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses (refer to Appendix C – Project Map).

The SOW serves to develop an integrated document fulfilling DM requirements for the Project (which encompasses green forest restoration activities [see Appendix A – Draft Purpose and Need & Preliminary Proposed Action]), including necessary reports for compliance with environmental laws outlined in NEPA. The DM will be developed in adherence to federal and Forest Service standards, including laws such as NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Materials produced by the Contractor will also conform to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Handbook.

Detailed standards for the DM are provided in this SOW, along with templates and examples for Specialist Reports or Resource Reports in the Forest Service-Furnished Property section.

### **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Contractor will be responsible for the production of a decision on the Project (DM/Supporting Reports) in accordance with the Forest Service's most recent NEPA Handbook and in compliance with the SNF 2023 Land Management Plan (LMP). The Contractor's proposal should describe methods for completion of work on the DM consistent with NEPA standards and requirements.

### **SCOPE**

The Contractor shall develop a Final Proposed Action to achieve the Purpose and Need that addresses required design features intended to mitigate any significant effects and ensure Forest Plan compliance. The analysis, spanning from finalizing the Proposed Action to Decision Memo

production, will identify and evaluate all relevant impacts, conditions, and issues resulting from the Proposed Action. Activities that may be analyzed as part of this NEPA document to meet desired conditions include but are not limited to:

- Controlling non-native invasive plants through integrated pest management.
- Reducing surface fuels.
- Haul routes, hazardous tree removal, water drafting, etc.
- Thinning live vegetation to eliminate ladder fuels, increase tree and/or crown spacing and reduce tree density and thinning of larger diameter trees (10 – 29.9 inches DBH) as well as trees below 10” DBH using conventional logging equipment to reduce fire severity and restore forest health.
- Felling and removing or piling standing dead trees and accumulations of hazardous fuels.
- Meadow restoration activities.
- Application of design features to protect sensitive project area resources from undesired effects and ensure consistency with the Forest Plan, law, regulation, and policy.

## **LOCATION**

The Project is located at high elevation above Huntington Lake on the High Sierra Ranger District (see Appendix C – Project Map). The location of treatment areas within this larger Project area will be determined by the Forest Service during the early 2024 field season. Preliminary treatment area maps shall be prepared prior to the kick-off meeting. Areas included for evaluation of environmental effects/determination of extraordinary circumstances shall be determined by the Contractor and shall be clearly bounded in time and space.

## **PROJECT COMPLEXITY**

The Project is a green forest restoration project located in the San Joaquin River watershed, situated east of Huntington Lake between the Kaiser and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses (see Appendix C – Project Map). The Project intends to strategically treat approximately 4,500 acres out of a 11,000-acre Project footprint. Approximately 500 treatment acres are within an Inventoried Roadless Area. See Appendix A – Draft Purpose and Need & Preliminary Proposed Action for general project information. The Project includes treatment of approximately 4,500 acres using a variety of methods, including thinning large (>10”) and small (<10”) diameter stands, and hand treatments. It is anticipated that this project will be completed under the “Wildfire Resilience” categorical exclusion (HFRA, Section 605(c)(2)(C)). Species listed under the Endangered Species Act and special interest species that are known to occur within the Project area include the Pacific fisher (Endangered), California spotted owl (candidate for listing), great grey owl and northern goshawk (USFS Species of Conservation Concern). There are also meadows and riparian areas with species Federally-listed as Threatened, such as the Yosemite Toad. Public interest in the Project is expected to be moderate to high because of local interest in green tree thinning, potential species effects, uncharacteristic fire behavior and the presence of sensitive land allocations, Inventoried Roadless Areas, proximity to wilderness, and the wilderness viewshed. The Project will likely garner interest from native American tribal partners and other stakeholders. In addition, the Project should align with and follow current USFS Climate Change guidance.

## II. Outline of Work

### TASKS & DELIVERABLES

The following section specifies the minimum number of tasks that shall be completed to fulfill the obligations of this SOW. Deliverables are due as proposed in a schedule to be finalized by NFF/FS at the Kick-Off Meeting. The schedule will be based on a final CE/DM date of January 31, 2024 (refer to Table 2, below).

The Forest Service's comments on all draft documents and deliverables included within this SOW will be delivered within a maximum of 15 calendar days, unless otherwise stated. Draft documents will be sent to the Forest Service contact and NFF Contracting Representative (COR) for review. Once reviewed and returned to the contractor, the Contractor shall incorporate the Forest Service's comments and resend the final version, unless stated otherwise. If the Forest Service does not believe their comments were adequately addressed, the Contractor will readdress the comments to the satisfaction of the Forest Service while maintaining the schedule and without additional cost to FS/NFF.

**Standard:** Deliverables are to be provided in Microsoft Word, Excel, Access and/or Adobe PDF, unless otherwise directed or agreed to by the Forest Service. Draft deliverables for review will be in Microsoft Word and Forest Service Comments on drafts will be in Microsoft Word with "Track Changes".

The Contractor shall furnish the Forest Service and NFF a memorandum of each meeting held, summarizing any agreements or decisions reached and include these in the Project record as appropriate. All memoranda shall be provided within five (5) workdays of the meeting. The Contractor will provide a meeting agenda prior to meetings including any briefing papers that delineate issues that need to be discussed and matters of agreement or decisions that need to be determined by the Forest Service. Deliverables for Tasks listed below will be reviewed and approved by the NFF/Forest Service before the Contractor submits the next Task deliverable, unless agreed to by the Forest Service. Multiple rewrites of Deliverables that don't meet Resource Standards shall not affect the Schedule unless agreed to by NFF and the Forest Service.

**Table 1. Project Task List**

Tasks	Project Task Descriptions
1	Attend and Participate in Kick-Off Meeting (Meeting with IDT); Progress Meetings/Conference Calls
2	Finalize the Proposed Action
3	Management and Disposition of Scoping Comments
4	Resources Inventory and Opportunities Constraints
5	Interagency Consultation, Coordination, Documentation, and Data Compilation (on-going)
6	Conduct Required Environmental Analyses and Prepare Draft DM to Comply with NEPA
7	Finalize the DM for Review by the Forest Service
8	Prepare DM for Distribution
9	Maintain and Provide Project Record

**Table 2. Task Responsibilities, Project Timeline, and Deliverables**

<b>Task, Deliverable, Project Action</b>	<b>Date/Responsible Party</b>
Kick-Off Meeting (Task 1)	TBD FS, NFF, Contractor
Finalized Proposed Action Documentation (Task 2)	TBD Contractor
Scoping Evaluation and Proposal Documentation (Task 3)	TBD Contractor
Resource Inventory Report [RIP] (Tasks 4 & 5)	TBD Contractor
NEPA Analysis Report and Draft DM (Task 6)	TBD Contractor
Finalized DM (Task 7)	TBD FS, NFF, Contractor
DM Distribution (Task 8)	TBD Contractor
Project Record Documentation (Task 9)	1/31/25 Contractor

*\*Dates will be confirmed upon contract award at the project Kick-Off meeting.*

### **Task 1: Attend and Participate in Kick-Off Meeting and Progress Review Meetings/Conference Calls.**

Appropriate personnel from the Contractor's staff will participate in a meeting to be hosted by the Forest Service upon receipt of the Notice To Proceed (NTP). The dates for the meeting are to be determined after the contract has been awarded. This date is negotiable between the Forest Service Team Leader and the Project Lead from the Contractor's staff based on ID Team availability. Coordination of the meeting will be the responsibility of the Forest Service. The meeting will consist of one office day and one field day to familiarize the Contractor's staff with the Project area. The Contractor must be prepared to actively participate in the meeting and lead a discussion of the total time frame for the preparation of the DM.

The Contractor will consult with the Forest Service and NFF to schedule and conduct progress review meetings, including weekly conference calls (1/2-2 hours) and location checkpoint meetings at critical points within the planning schedule. The Contractor is responsible for scheduling at least five (5) checkpoint meetings. It is anticipated that location meetings will require at least one full day per meeting and will be held in the Forest Service's office or in the field. The Contractor is expected to have in attendance, or otherwise available, sufficient members of the Contractor's team to adequately address any issues or actionable items. The Contractor shall keep notes from each conference call or meeting and submit to the Forest Service and NFF within 2 days. All significant notes will become part of the Project Record.

Associated Work Tasks:

- a) **Project Initiations and Site Visit:** A project team of Contractor representatives will be identified for the Project including the Project Manager (PM). For the duration of the contract, any change in PM must be approved by the NFF. The Contractor, with the assistance of Forest Service, shall become familiar with authorized project purposes, the

study area, Forest Service's resource management planning efforts including the all the various documentation relative to the Project, the area's natural, cultural, and recreational resource issues and needs, the various publics who have an interest in the development and management of the land and water resources, which are Forest Service's responsibility, the issues, concerns and policies (past and present) of Forest Service's management of these land and water resources, existing resource commitments, pertinent studies, reports and maps of the area, and the potential for management by federal, state, local, or non-profit partners, as well as, private concessions. Preliminary perceptions of the key issues, priorities, and expectations and an overview of the existing information will be discussed with Forest Service during initial information meetings.

**Standard:** The Contractor shall provide their staff with field transportation and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

### **Task 2: Finalize the Proposed Action.**

The Forest Service shall provide a preliminary Proposed Action (Appendix A – Purpose and Need & Preliminary Proposed Action) with general conservation measures to the Contractor. The Contractor shall finalize the Proposed Action, including project design and project maps, to ensure that it responds to the Purpose and Need and complies with the Line Officer's direction. This includes implementation methods to be utilized and finalizing treatment areas that meet the Project's objectives while minimizing negative impacts to the landscape. The silviculturalist will work with members of the IDTeam to take the preliminary Proposed Actions and develop unit specific desired outcomes and treatments. Treatments will be designed and quantified to achieve the purpose and need objectives while following the Forest Plan and all applicable laws and regulations. Generally, treatments within habitat for threatened or endangered species (California Spotted Owl, Pacific Fisher, Yosemite Toad, ect.) will be more restrictive than treatments outside this habitat. Designing these treatments will be needed to determine intensity of proposed vegetation management actions to comply with residual canopy cover and California Wildlife Habitat Relationship post treatment to meet conservation measures required by the Forest Plan and facilitate the wildlife impact analysis related to ESA and extraordinary circumstances. The USFS has common stand exam data (collected in fall of 2023) available for this project area that can be analyzed using FVS (Forest Vegetation Simulator). This data will be provided to the contractor. F3 vegetation data may also be used. This data can be provided at the Contractor's request. Alternate data sets may be used if requested and as approved by NFF/FS.

The preliminary Proposed Action as provided by the Forest Service will include treatment units, treatment activities, approximate acres to be included in analysis and/or treated, and preliminary project design features and associated road and fuels treatment actions, and any other relevant data and activities necessary to finalize the proposal. The Contractor will ensure consistency with the LMP. The preliminary Proposed Action and Maps (with associated GIS layers) will be provided by the Forest Service.

**Standard:** The Final Project Record and Documentation Maps shall meet mapping standards as described in the Maps section of this SOW and Resource Standards and Deliverables for [GIS](#) described in Appendix D – Supporting Information. The Final Proposed Action and Project Map shall be reviewed and approved by the Forest Service prior to the initiation of DM development.

### **Task 3: Management and Disposition of Scoping Comments.**

Scoping was completed as of January 19, 2024 with four comments received. The Contractor will evaluate scoping comments and identify issues for responsible official approval. Proposals for addressing issues, as applicable, in the DM should be developed for FS consideration.

### **Task 4: Resources Inventory and Opportunities Constraints.**

The Contractor shall be responsible for collecting and reviewing the 2023 LMP public scoping comments, GIS compiled data, and any other studies, reports, and plans including those developed by county, state, and other federal agencies that are related to or affect the Project. The Contractor shall compile a complete inventory of existing resources, facilities, and conditions needed to perform the required environmental analysis of the Project. The resource inventory and opportunities constraints surveys must include, but is not limited to, the following items:

- Vegetation
  - Federally endangered, threatened, proposed or candidate species of plants.
  - Federally proposed or designated critical habitat for plants
  - All other special status plant species
  - Invasive plant species
- Fish & Wildlife/Biological Assessment
  - Federally endangered, threatened, proposed or candidate species of fauna
  - Federally proposed or designated critical habitat for fish and wildlife
  - All other special status fauna
- Cultural Resources:
  - Historic – including State Historic Preservation Act
  - Archeological data
- Indigenous Trust Assets (tribal consultation has been initiated)
- Biological Evaluation
  - Species of Conservation Concern
  - Migratory Bird Impact Analysis

Associated Work Tasks:

- a) **Prepare a Resource Inventory Report (RIP):** The report shall identify, inventory, map, and describe the existing condition of the resources, elements and surveys listed above. The Contractor shall prepare and evaluate the existing data gathered on surveys described above and determine any data gaps or needs. The Contractor shall then propose to Forest Service any additional studies required in order to complete the DM. The Contractor shall use the Final RIP to address the baseline for extraordinary circumstances determinations.
- b) **Collect and Review Existing Conditions and Data:** This task will involve collecting and reviewing existing data on the resources and the uses within the Project area for the purpose of understanding any constraints and or opportunities regarding the DM development. The Contractor shall obtain copies of existing plans, procedures, agreements, Habitat Conservation Plans, relevant Biological Opinions, and gather all pertinent available background data about the area from stakeholders and other local agencies to be put into a library file. A bibliography that identifies all known resources will be concurrently prepared.

### **Task 5: Interagency Coordination, Consultation, Documentation, and Data Compilation.**

The Contractor shall include drafting documents to be used in consultation with agencies and tribes throughout the coordination process. The Contractor shall maintain regular communications with Forest specialists and consulting agencies throughout preparation of the DM and shall compile all collected and provided data. The Contractor shall track progress and support FS consultation/coordination with agencies to obtain agency-provided data or concurrence in a timely manner. Assistance with agency coordination will be provided by the Forest Service, as necessary or appropriate.

### **Task 6: Conduct Required Environmental Analyses and Prepare Draft DM to Comply with NEPA.**

The Contractor shall conduct all necessary analyses in compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and policies and to provide the background information for the DM. The Contractor shall review gathered information and data furnished by the Forest Service and/or the cooperating agencies to prepare narratives documenting baseline environmental and socio-economic conditions as appropriate. The Contractor shall gather data describing the environmental resources, environmental conditions, historic and archeological properties, and inventoried roadless areas as they relate to extraordinary circumstances. The documentation must be sufficient to conclude whether extraordinary circumstances will be significantly affected and a rationale for this determination. The Contractor will also obtain data necessary to address how the Project meets categorical exclusion standards. Preliminary project design features provided as an example by the FS should be finalized to be project specific to Kaiser East.

Using information described in the Proposed Action, baseline environmental information, scoping information, and information resulting from the data gathering tasks and site visits, the Contractor shall address the potential impacts anticipated from the Proposed Action to meet NEPA, ESA, and other applicable laws. The Contractor will complete direct, indirect, and cumulative effects analysis for required natural and cultural resources and those that are relevant to action alternatives and issues, and specialist reports. For the topics that are indicated as resource areas needing further environmental analysis, the Contractor will utilize the survey and inventory data collected and/or existing data to conduct an analysis of environmental impacts. Any issues raised during the public scoping period will be identified by the contractor. Impacts serve to highlight effects or unintended consequences that may occur from the Proposed Action and alternatives, giving opportunities during the analysis to reduce adverse effects and compare trade-offs for the decisionmaker and public to understand. An impact statement should describe a specific action and the environmental effect(s) expected to result from that action. The Contractor shall prepare the DM in conformance with the Forest Service and Council for Environmental Quality regulations, and the resource specifications provided by the Forest Service.

#### Associated Work Tasks:

- a) **Specialist Reports, Required Reports, and Write-ups:** These reports provide background information and effects analysis for the DM. Some reports are required by law or regulation, including biological assessments/evaluations (BA/BE) and archaeological reconnaissance reports. These reports will include discussion of issues, methods, compliance with relevant

laws and regulations, and direct and indirect impacts and effects. The Contractor will provide reports and analyses at a minimum of the following resources: Vegetation (Silviculture), aquatics, heritage resources, hydrology and soils, wilderness, recreation (including inventoried roadless areas), and wildlife. The Contractor will complete Inventory Roadless Analysis, Wilderness Viewshed Impacts reporting, and Pacific Crest Trail Viewshed reporting as necessary. As applicable, the Contractor will complete the required Old Growth Forest evaluation sufficiently early in the Project timeline to get Washington Office project approval prior to the signing of the DM.

- b) Heritage Resource Survey:** In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Heritage resource survey and associated report will be completed by an outside contractor and provided by the NFF in the fall of 2024. The DM cultural resources sections shall include a summary of the archeological technical report findings sufficient to demonstrate whether extraordinary circumstances will occur due to the Project Deliverables provided by the Contractor will be reviewed by Forest Service inspectors for sufficiency and quality assurance. All associated mapping and GIS analysis will be conducted by the Contractor using data layers provided by the Forest Service. The Cultural Resources Technical Appendix will contain confidential information detailing the location of sensitive cultural resources. Location data and information of cultural resources will not be reproduced within any other documentation associated with the Project DM. The DM shall reference and be consistent with all applicable Forest Service policy, directives, and standards, including, but not limited to, Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2309.12 (Heritage Program Management Handbook).
- c) Biological Resources:** The Contractor shall produce a Biological Assessment (BA) and Biological Evaluation (BE) on the potential impact of the proposed Project on wildlife, plant communities, and fisheries in relation to the 2023 SNF LMP. These reports provide the background information and effects analysis for the DM. All associated mapping and GIS analysis will be conducted by the Contractor using data layers provided by the Forest Service, including existing vegetation mapping for the Project area. The analysis shall meet the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and be adequate to support any needed threatened and/or endangered species consultation. The BA shall include logical analyses supported by rigorous science of the potential effect of the Proposed Action on listed and proposed species as well as designated and proposed critical habitat as defined under the ESA. Applicable sections developed for the resource inventory shall be incorporated into the BA as appropriate. In conjunction with the FS, the Contractor shall meet with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as necessary to ensure that the appropriate information is being provided to comply with relevant standards and regulations. The following information must be included in the preparation of the BA:
- Define the proposed Federal action and Forest Service's legal authority and capabilities.
  - Identify the Proposed Action area within the Project Area.
  - Identify and document the occurrence of Federally-listed species and proposed species, including designated and proposed critical habitat that could occur within the Project Area.
  - Define the environmental baseline and the action area consistent with 50 CFR 402.02.

- Describe the relevant direct and indirect effect and interrelated and interdependent activities of the Forest Service action on listed and proposed species and designated and proposed critical habitats including, but not limited to, effect on:
  - Population Numbers
  - Population Distribution
  - Breeding, Feeding, and Shelter
  - Existing Habitat
- Include a specific finding of effect (i.e., no effect, not likely to adversely affect, or adverse effect) on listed and proposed species, and designated and proposed critical habitat for listed species, and the supporting rationale for that finding.
- Include or reference related and relevant reports and information.
- Identify when incidental take is expected and identify the form and extent of incidental take.
- Identify measures to reduce or eliminate any potential of a jeopardy opinion from FWS and/or reduce where such conditions are expected to occur.
- Identify where scientific data is lacking, and/or uncertainty exists with respect to the outcome or the environmental effects.
- Biological Evaluation to address potential impacts to Species of Conservation Concern as determined by the Regional Forester. The BE template will be provided by the Forest Service.

**d) Hydrology and Soils:** The Contractor shall analyze the potential effects to municipal watersheds, flood plains and wetlands sufficiently to determine if there are extraordinary circumstances related to the Project. A discussion of Best Management Practices (BMPs) shall be included, providing a listing of the applicable BMPs, the timing and location of implementation, and the purpose for each BMP which would be addressed in the design features in the Proposed Action.

The Contractor shall produce an analysis report of relevant data and information pertaining to hydrological resources sufficient to address any extraordinary circumstances identified in the DM. All associated mapping and GIS analysis will be conducted by the Contractor using data layers provided by the Forest Service.

**e) Vegetation (Silviculture):** The Contractor shall analyze the effects of the proposed vegetation management actions. The specialist report should discuss methodology used for analysis (data and analysis tools used), the existing condition of vegetation within the project area, and how our proposed treatments move the existing condition towards the desired conditions as described in the SNF LMP. The report should address potential treatment methods. This report should also include unit specific Silvicultural prescriptions based on the finalized proposed actions, the constraints imposed by other resources, and the analysis conducted by the silviculturist. Prescriptions should address treatments for conifers above 10" DBH, conifers below 10" DBH, treatment of non-conifer vegetation, and treatment of surface fuels.

**Standard:** The Contractor shall use the USFS DM Template and prepare the document in accordance with CFR regulations. The text shall be error free, complete, clear, concise, and grammatically correct. The main text of the report shall be written in a manner suitable for reading by persons not professionally trained for the technical subject discussed. The DM shall

be an analytical document attached reference material. Acronyms shall be used only on a limited basis. Any acronyms used shall be defined on first use and included in a list of acronyms page. Drawings, photographs, and text shall be sufficient to adequately cover the material, eliminating any extraneous information. The DM shall also include a brief summary of the Project and overall findings.

#### **Task 7: Finalize the DM for Review by the Forest Service.**

After incorporating all Forest Service recommended changes, the Contractor shall provide the Final DM in Word format for Forest Service approval. After approval of the Final DM, the Contractor shall provide an Adobe Acrobat version of the DM for Forest Service approval and posting on the Forest Service's website. The Contractor will prepare a draft DM and obtain Line Officer input/review.

Associated Work Tasks:

- a) **Analysis in the DM:** The Contractor shall conduct all necessary analyses to comply with the law, regulation, and policy, as well as provide the background information for the DM. The Contractor shall gather information and use the information/data furnished by the Forest Service and/or the cooperating agencies. The Contractor shall review existing data describing the environmental resources, environmental conditions, and historic and archeological properties that may be potentially impacted by the Project, including inventoried roadless areas. The results of public scoping and tribal consultation will be addressed in the DM. The documentation must be sufficient to, at a minimum (1) assess the environmental, historic, economic, and social resources that will be affected, either beneficially or adversely, by the Proposed Actions and (2) demonstrate compliance with NEPA and other laws, regulation and policy. An explanation of the applicability of the determined CE category will be addressed in the DM.
- b) **Post the Draft DM:** The Contractor shall submit the Microsoft Word version of the draft DM to the Forest Service for review. The Forest Service will review the document within four weeks from the posting date and provide comments and edits to the Contractor. Meetings or conference calls will be held to discuss revisions to the Draft DM. Assume that the meeting will require 8 hours per ID team member, plus travel time and costs if the meeting is held at the District Renger's Office instead of via a conference call. After incorporating the changes, the Contractor shall provide the final DM for review and approval.
- c) **Maintain Bibliography of References and Data Sources:** The Contractor shall develop and update the Bibliography throughout the project development process, with data sources and reports noted. These documents become part of the Project Record, and the updated Bibliography shall be incorporated into the DM. The Final DM Bibliography shall be limited to references used in the DM. The Contractor shall provide all reference documents in electronic format unless otherwise agreed to.

**Standard:** USFS DM Template and CEQ regulations.

### **Task 8: Prepare DM for Distribution.**

The Contractor will update and finalize the Decision Memo, and any related materials for Forest Service review, complete final checkpoint meeting, and District Ranger briefing, and coordinate District Ranger's signature for decision notice.

The Contractor shall deliver a PDF version of the Final DM to the Forest Service. The Contractor shall be responsible for distribution of the Final DM to the scoping commenters emailing list and any tribes consulted throughout the duration of the Project. The Contractor will provide hard copies of the Final DM to those requesting them and to the tribes.

**Standards:** USFS DM Template. Regional Publishing Processes.

### **Task 9: Maintain and Provide Project Record.**

The Contractor shall prepare and assemble a Project Record and furnish one electronic copy (of electronic documents) on flash drive to the Forest Service and NFF within 2 weeks of signing the DM. The Project Record includes all information and analyses either generated or obtained from other sources or used to support documentation and analyses. A complete Project Record is the entirety of the information relied upon within the Contractor's possession plus all information in other locations listed in the references. Information listed in the references at other locations does not have to be included. The Contractor shall organize the information composing the Project Record by topic and include an index.

**Standard:** Refer to Region 5 Project File Management procedures provided by the Forest Service.

## **MAPS**

At a minimum, the Contractor shall produce a Treatment Area/Proposed Action Area Map and a Project Area Map as required for supporting documentation.

**Standard:** Maps shall contain, at a minimum, a title, scale, legend, north arrow, range and Section lines, UTM coordinates, roads, streams, cities, and private property. Map scales shall be appropriate for readability and use, as agreed to by the Forest Service. Paper size for maps shall be agreed to by the Forest Service. All associated mapping and Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis will be conducted by the Contractor using data layers provided by the Forest Service. It is assumed that development of new GIS layers by the Contractor will not be necessary; however, if new layers are needed, this will be negotiated upon approval of the Forest Service per the standards outlined in Appendix D – Supporting Information.

## **SCHEDULE & MEETINGS**

Required Meetings will be held at the Supervisor's Office in Clovis, California or online via Microsoft TEAMS, unless otherwise specified. The Contractor shall schedule meetings to review and discuss project progress and to discuss any problems or concerns that may arise. Dates and locations for these meetings shall be mutually agreed upon as necessary.

The Contractor shall develop a detailed schedule to be included within their solicitation proposal. The schedule will be based on the tasks listed above pending an IDT kick-off meeting at a to-be-determined date for accomplishing a DM deliverable date of January 31, 2025. Preliminary reports, survey data and the preliminary Proposed Action will be provided by the Forest Service to the Contractor at the kick-off meeting or the week following the meeting (if additional data needs are identified). Each task deliverable submitted by the Contractor shall be considered complete when the deliverable is approved by the NFF.

Should implementation of a task be delayed, or document review times by the Forest Service take longer than expected, the entire schedule of events may be shifted or extended by agreement of both parties. The Contractor will be advised as soon as possible about any delay or change in review time.

## **FOREST SERVICE-FURNISHED PROPERTY**

For the listed Project Tasks, the Contractor must provide all necessary resources, including labor, equipment, supplies, services, permits, and licenses that are not provided as Forest Service Furnished Property (see Table 3. Forest Service Furnished Property below). These resources are essential for collecting field data, completing the Decision Memo (DM), and producing supporting documentation and deliverables.

**Table 3. Forest Service Furnished Property**

<b>Gov. Furnished Property</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>
No equipment, vehicles, or workspace will be provided by the Forest Service			
Resource Standards and Deliverables and Resource Links to Standards and Deliverables	1	During Solicitation	Zip File
Key Forest Service Contacts Phone Numbers	3		
Forest IDT Contacts	1	After Award	Email to Contractor IDT Lead
Project Map and Vicinity Map	GIS Products	During Solicitation	Zip File
Results of Scoping Efforts to Date		After Award	
Resource GIS layers, Cartographic Base Layers, and Mapping Standards	As Available	After Award	Link, External Hard Drive or CD as Agreed
Initial Mailing List of Interested Entities and Assistance in Refining Mailing List	1	After Award	Email
As available, guidance or examples of resource analysis.	On Request	After Award	Email
USFS Template for DM.	1	During Solicitation	Email
Survey Data and Preliminary Reports to Support the Proposed Action	1		Email
Results of Collaboration with Indigenous Tribes	As Available	Ongoing during Project development.	Email
Region 5 Project File Management Procedures	1	After Award	Email

## **FOREST SERVICE & PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES**

Tasks and deliverables specified in this SOW shall utilize the templates provided and meet standards outlined within this SOW. The Contractor shall be responsible for the professional and technical accuracy of all work or services rendered. Errors and/or deficiencies resulting from the Contractor's performance shall be corrected by the Contractor at no additional cost to FS/NFF. The Forest Service shall provide access to reports, memoranda, photographs, drawings, maps and any other materials in its possession that are pertinent to this contract.

A PM shall be confirmed at the kick-off meeting. The NFF Contracting Representative (COR) shall serve as the main project liaison on behalf of the Forest Service. This individual will be the primary contact with the Forest Service to help facilitate information flow, reviews and answer questions that arise pertaining to contract parameters.

The NFF Contracting Representative shall be available to provide specific information on the details of the contract and shall serve as the Contractor's primary contact. Responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Monitoring the progress of the planning effort, identifying problem areas, and works to resolve conflicts on technical, scheduling and policy matters,
- Reviewing Contractor's performance, reports, and other material for adequacy and conformance with contract parameters and objectives,
- Coordinating the overall planning effort with the Contractor and Forest Service team members. Includes, but is not limited to collaboration efforts, the public involvement process, data gathering, analysis of information, and completion of the plan.

# **Appendix A**

## **Draft Purpose and Need & Preliminary Proposed Action**

### **Background**

The structure, composition, and function of Sierra Nevada conifer forest are highly departed from the desired conditions in the 2023 SNF Land Management Plan that are based on the natural range of variability (NRV). Disruption of the historic fire regime of relatively frequent, low to moderate severity fires due to fire suppression is a primary driver, but other factors associated with Euro-American settlement such as livestock grazing, timber harvest, and landscape fragmentation due to development also play a role in this result. Climate change likely already has and will continue to exacerbate the effects of various trends and factors, leading to the widely accepted view that “A significant increase in treatment pace and scale is needed to restore dry western US forest resilience to increasingly severe wildfire and drought” (North et al. 2021).

Species composition within yellow pine and mixed conifer forests in the Sierra Nevada has shifted from dominance by shade-intolerant and fire tolerant species to dominance by shade tolerant and fire intolerant species. Average adult tree densities have increased by a factor of two to four, and average basal area is equal to or greater than pre-settlement forests despite average tree diameter being 40 to 50 percent smaller (Safford and Stevens, 2017). Canopy cover now averages 33 percent higher, forest structure has been greatly homogenized, with a dramatic reduction in size and number of canopy gaps, and snag and coarse woody debris densities average higher than in pre-settlement forests (Safford and Stevens 2017).

The historic, heterogeneous forest structure consisting of individual trees, clumps of trees, and intervening openings has been shown to contain average densities considerably lower than current, uniformly dense forests (North et al. 2022). Whereas modern forests often have relative stand density indices in the range of full occupancy and full competition, or in the zone of imminent mortality, historical forests likely had average relative stand density indices in the range of less than full site occupancy to low competition, and only occasionally being in the zone of full competition (North et al. 2022). Finally, fuel loads are estimated to have increased by an average of 70 to 100 percent over the past century or so, with the result being the well documented trend in recent decades of increasing fire size, and increasing amount of uncharacteristic high-severity fire, in terms of both percentage as well as total acreage of high severity fire, estimated at 5 to 10 times greater than in the average pre-settlement fire (Safford and Stevens 2017).

The extreme drought of 2012 through 2016 exacerbated the above trends. This sustained drought interacted with excessive forest density and a massive bark beetle infestation to cause significant tree mortality in the southern Sierra Nevada. Over time, these large concentrations of dead trees will add to the already unnaturally high surface fuel loads, including extensive loading of large-sized woody surface fuels that can contribute to dangerous “mass fires” (Stephens et al. 2018), exemplified by the two fire tornadoes that occurred early in the Creek Fire of 2020. Current conditions and disturbance trends in Sierra Nevada conifer forests threaten multiple values that these forests provide, including wildlife habitat, watershed protection, scenery, and

recreational opportunities. Projections of observed loss rates of mature forest to high-severity fire indicate these losses could consume all available high quality nesting habitat for the California spotted owl within 75 years (Stephens et al. 2016). Recent fire seasons including 2017, 2018, and 2020 had more fire area and high severity fire area in California than most if not all years included in the Stephens et al. (2016) study. Further, there is evidence that dense, fuel loaded forests that burn at high fire severity may be susceptible to repeat high-severity fire within relatively short timeframes (Coppoletta et al. 2016). “Today, the major threat is clearly loss of forest – old growth or not – to severe wildfire and insect and direct drought mortality” (Safford and Stevens 2017, Keeley and Safford 2016). “With the contemporary increase in compounding stresses such as drought, bark beetles, and high-severity fire, resilience in frequent-fire forests may hinge on creating stands with significantly lower densities and minimal competition” (North et al. 2022).

Upper montane forests in the Sierra Nevada, composed of red fir, Jeffrey pine and lodgepole pine, occur at higher elevations than montane yellow pine and mixed conifer forests, but these two general types do intermix in a transition zone. Although the same factors that cause departure in mixed conifer forests also affect upper montane forests, these forests are not generally believed to be as strongly departed from desired conditions based on Natural Range of Variation (Meyer \_\_\_\_). However, tree mortality has increased significantly since 2006 due to insects, pathogens, and droughts, including large and old trees. Also, climate change and other factors are expected to accelerate trends of increasing fire size and proportion of high-severity fire in the future Meyer \_\_\_\_).

The Project was designed to address the following needs:

- There is a need to reduce surface fuel loading towards desired conditions and manage for desired future surface fuel loads recognizing recent tree mortality, to reduce likelihood of high severity fire.
- There is a need to manage stand density of trees in size classes between 10-inch diameter at breast height (dbh) and 30 inch dbh (possibly larger in some stands) to move density and spatial pattern towards desired conditions to increase resilience and resistance to stressors such as drought, density, and insect related mortality as well as high severity fire. Excess density in this size class is related to undesirable ladder fuels and continuous canopy fuel loading, as well as a driver of mortality that will add to the already unnaturally high surface fuel loads in these forests.
- There is a need to promote survival of existing shade-intolerant and fire-tolerant ponderosa, sugar, and Jeffrey pines, and increase regeneration and recruitment of these species to move species composition towards desired conditions based on the natural range of variation.
- There is a need to reduce ladder fuels and reduce the recruitment of shade-tolerant trees into stands by removing primarily shade tolerant trees and some shrubs from the lower canopy, generally sapling-sized trees less than 10-inch dbh.
- There is a need to avoid inadvertently increasing surface fuel loads that would result from improper treatment and disposal of activity fuels (slash and other woody debris resulting from treatment activities).

The overall purpose of this project is to alter forest structure and composition so the landscape is moving towards desired conditions based on the natural range of variation, reducing the risk of loss of forest stands within the project area to large-scale disturbances including uncharacteristic high-severity fire, droughts, and insect infestations. Achieving this purpose will increase resilience of these forests to expected future stressors including changing climate, and provide sustainability of desired forest cover for the multiple benefits that conifer forest in the Sierra Nevada provide. Achieving this purpose will also facilitate restoring the historic fire regime by increasing the likelihood of less severe fire effects in future fires, planned or unplanned, due to more favorable fuel profiles and fuel loading. The reintroduction of periodic low- to moderate severity fire will benefit sustainability of these forest into the future.

### **Proposed Action**

To achieve this purpose and address these needs, the following activities will be applied according to site and stand specific prescriptions to move stands toward desired conditions.

- Thinning live trees larger than 10-inch dbh throughout the range of diameters to reduce density, increase spatial heterogeneity, reduce ladder fuels, and in some cases creation of canopy gaps to increase spatial heterogeneity and facilitate regeneration of shade-intolerant species.
- Thinning live trees and shrubs less than 10-inch dbh to reduce ladder fuels and promote a heterogeneous spatial pattern of individual trees, clumps of trees and openings, and some shrub dominated patches.
- Felling snags in excess of densities required for desired conditions.
- Disposing of material cut in aforementioned activities (a., b., and c.) by yarding merchantable material (sawlog or biomass) to landings for removal from the Sierra National Forest, or piling for burning of cull material and slash. Piles may be within the units or assembled at landings via various methods including whole-tree yarding, or machine or hand piling.
- Disposing of existing large woody surface fuels by yarding logs to landings for disposal, and piling logs, limbwood, and tops for disposal by burning.
- Planting of appropriate conifer species with an emphasis on shade-intolerant pines to improve species composition towards desired conditions where appropriate planting sites exist following other treatments.
- Restoring wildlife habitat in conjunction with resilience, and other restoration treatments described below, including:
  - Piling or felling some dead trees and logs (large woody material) where needed to provide for denning, hiding cover, soil stabilization, and aquatic habitat features.
  - Enhancing black oak aggregates.
  - Controlling and managing non-native invasive plants through integrated pest management approach using herbicide, mechanical, and manual methods where invasive plant species occur throughout the Project area.
  - Felling and removing hazardous trees along roadsides and within certain recreation sites, administrative sites, range infrastructure, heritage sites, and within areas where crews would be working as applicable to each project.
  - Applying design features to protect sensitive project area resources from undesired effects and ensure consistency with the Forest Plan, law, regulation, and policy.
  - Meadow enhancement and restoration.