



Maintenance & Resources Management Committee

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Oct. 21, 2020 – Jan. 19, 2021

Environmental Resources Program Overview:

During the last 3 months, the Environmental Resources Program activities have included field assessment and topographic data collection at English Meadow; watershed education and outreach to university students; fire fuels treatment at Scotts Flat Reservoir; and grant reporting. Cameron Townsend has been hired as the Environmental Resources Technician, and continues to provide programmatic capacity and technical field support for grant activities and wildfire risk reduction projects, including responding to requests from neighbors regarding fuels conditions and defensible space project design, PG&E vegetation work associated with line hardening, and Scotts Flat Reservoir project implementation. Environmental Resources staff are developing the CEQA documents for the English Meadow Restoration Project in partnership with Plumas Corporation, and are actively working with regional partners to finalize the update to the Cosumnes, American, Bear, and Yuba River (CABY) Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (*see update below*).

Jones Fire Aftermath, 2020



In November, NID Environmental Resources staff visited an area that was devastated by the Jones Fire earlier this year as part of a local wildfire preparedness and watershed education tour with UC Santa Barbara master's students. This tour included additional areas where NID has completed fire fuels treatment to remove the understory or ladder fuels that are 10-inches in diameter and smaller, as well as selective harvest areas near Scotts Flat Reservoir, where we have created a shaded fuel break. The realities of wildfire in the Wildland Urban Interface region that describes much of our area were stark and stunning after walking through part of the footprint of the Jones Fire.

GENERAL WATERSHED AND HEALTHY FORESTS PROGRAM UPDATE

Scotts Flat Reservoir Selective Timber Harvest

The Scotts Flat Timber Harvest Plan is completed, and the site has been inspected by CAL FIRE and is officially closed.

Fire Fuels Treatment and Hazard Tree Removal on District Property

Environmental Resources staff have completed hazard tree removal near the Ophir IV Canal and adjacent to the Cascade Pump station to improve the safety of these critical elements of the NID water delivery system. Staff will continue working near Scotts Flat and evaluating requests for fuels treatment using our prioritization scoring to ensure that we have met defensible space requirements for neighboring residences. Public Resource Code 4291 directs that a minimum defensible space of 100 ft adjacent to buildings shall be maintained.

Forest Management Plan for District-owned lands

Under development.

English Meadow

NID staff are working with technical consultants at Plumas Corporation, analyzing data collected for the restoration design and planning as part of our environmental compliance and permit application development for project implementation. In October 2020, we measured channel cross-sections and stream profiles to add to existing topographic data. We collected water temperature monitoring equipment and deployed trail cameras to photograph high water during the spring, 2021. The site visit included staff from the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, and U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest scientists. Subsequently, in November and December 2020, Environmental Resources staff have assisted with the development of the project description and biological sections for a Mitigated Negative Declaration and associated permit applications that will be completed during spring 2021.

GRANTS UPDATE

CAL FIRE CFIP Grant for Rollins Reservoir

Work is planned to begin January 2021 near Rollins Reservoir. CAL FIRE contract is executed for \$145,000 in funding through the California Forest Improvement Program for fire fuels treatment on an additional 103 acres at Orchard Springs and Long Ravine Campgrounds. Site preparation has begun and is being coordinated with nearby PG&E line hardening activities to remove trees and brush in the utility easement area.

SNC Fuels Treatment at Scotts Flat Phase 4

Project implementation continues, and mastication is underway near the community of Cascade Shores, the NID pump station, and the Cascade Pipeline. This grant agreement is executed with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for \$981,000 at Scotts Flat Reservoir to masticate fire fuels and improve forest health by creating a multi-species, multi-aged, properly spaced community. This project will improve watershed health while protecting water system infrastructure, terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and communities from elevated fire risk. In total, we will treat 300 acres by Jan. 1, 2022.

Wildlife Conservation Board English Meadow Floodplain Enhancement & Restoration Project- Recommended for Full Funding

This grant will be considered during August 2021 for award by the WCB Board. NID is developing a Mitigated Negative Declaration in partnership with Plumas Corporation in preparation for project implementation. An application was submitted for \$1.2M to WCB's Forest Conservation Program (Prop 68) to complete instream channel modifications (woody debris jam installation, filling of dewatering ditches, and headcut repairs on tributaries) and forest treatment to improve meadow floodplain functionality, reduce accumulated fire fuels, and thin the adjacent forested watershed of the Middle Yuba River headwaters.

OUTREACH, COLLABORATION & EDUCATION

CABY and Integrated Regional Water Management Planning

The Cosumnes American Bear Yuba IRWM Plan update is nearing completion, and an Administrative Draft is publicly available at www.cabyregion.org. Environmental Resources staff are participating in the activities of the Regional Water Management Group as final revisions are considered. A virtual public meeting is planned for Feb. 4, 2021, from 1-3 PM, to present the updated IRWM Plan, the current list of CABY projects that have been submitted, and a second invitation for public comments. After the public review is completed, the CABY IRWM Plan will be finalized and then submitted to the Dept. of Water Resources for their internal review and public process, with an anticipated completion date in April 2021. DWR will have approximately 30 days for their internal review, and then they open a 30-day public review process. After this is concluded, the plan is considered final and approved by DWR, and is then

ready for adoption by the CABY members. For more information, see www.CABYregion.org

Education & Outreach

A small group of Sustainable Water Markets Fellows from UC Santa Barbara came to the Scotts Flat Reservoir area to stay at an NID campground in November for 3 days as part of their fieldwork associated with prioritization of areas within the CABY region for prescribed burning. This group of master's students is part of the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, including Sustainable Water Markets fellows. This was a very positive engagement, and we are already discussing a return trip in early summer to bring the group to English Meadow.

Additionally, researchers from the Institute for Biodiversity and the Environment at William Jessup University have reached out. Discussion has begun to identify potential opportunities to engage their students in fieldwork and to assist NID with assessment and research where common interests are found. NID will also continue to work with CSU Sacramento researchers that are part of the English Meadow Technical Team.

Scotts Flat Fire Fuels Treatment, Phase 4 Partnership Project with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (mastication completed by Black Dog Enterprises)



Pre-treatment near the community of Cascade Shores, on NID property.



Post-treatment of the same location as above illustrating an open forest community of mixed age and mixed species composition.
