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Sponsors:

The County Board  
Of Supervisors:  
Mariposa  
Madera  
Fresno  
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Resource  
Conservation  
Districts:  
Coarsegold  
Chowchilla-Redtop  
Mariposa County  
Sierra  
Tulare County

Non-Profit  
Organizations:  
North Fork CDC  
California Amer-Asian  
Resource Education  
Mariposa County EDC  
Sierra Foothill  
Conservancy  
Sierra Vista Scenic  
Byway Association  
Fire Safe Councils:  
Mariposa County  
Eastern Madera County  
Highway 168  
Oak to Timberline  
Sequoia

Tribal Governments:  
North Fork Rancheria  
Big Sandy Rancheria  
Cold Springs Rancheria  
Tule River Reservation  
Picayune Rancheria

Coordinator  
Robyn Smith

Administrative Assistant:  
Nancy Buck

August 11, 2010

To the Madera Regional Water Management Group,

The Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council (the Council) offers its' commitment to participate in and assist with the Madera County (Regional) Water Plan development process. Therefore, we are submitting a signed resolution and MOU to participate. We are also interested in the opportunity to serve as the fiscal agent for the Madera County Water Management Plan project when funded by the Department of Water Resources. A primary goal of our organization is to ensure that our vital water resources are conserved, and that projects to improve water quality and increase availability are implemented to benefit our region.

The Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D is well qualified to serve as the fiscal agent for this project. We are a 501(c) 3 public benefit non-profit organization. We have established governance, which has been in place for nearly ten years. Our membership is broad (please see the list of sponsors on this letterhead). We also have a myriad of other partners that we work collaboratively with to leverage efforts for greater benefit for our areas resources. Many of our partner and sponsors are already involved and participating in the Madera County RWMP project, which helps to synchronize efforts between our organizations.

We have fiscal management capability that is well demonstrated by the successful completion of many grants to implement a wide array of projects that care for our natural resources and our rural communities. We are the fiscal agent for several ongoing projects as described in the attached Fiscal Agent Qualifications document. We have assisted several organizations with getting started, and we specialize in helping to connect the dots between projects, partners and funders.

Please see the attached Fiscal Agent Qualifications.

Our organization is dedicated to collaborating and supporting regional efforts to care for our vital natural resources and our rural communities. We look forward to working with the Madera Regional Water Management Group to facilitate the successful completion of this project.

Sincerely,

TOM WHEELER

President, Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council

*The mission of the Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D is to promote the quality and aesthetic values  
Of our cultural, environmental, and recreational resources by improving the quality  
Of life through diverse sustainable economic development*

# Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council

## Fiscal Agent Qualifications

for the

## Madera County IRWMP Program

August 27, 2010

### General Questions to be addressed:

#### **1. In-place financial and administrative capacity to administer large, complex multi-year grants:**

The Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council (the Council) is a regional organization that covers eastern Madera County – as well as all of Mariposa, eastern Fresno and Tulare Counties; and is headquartered in the Town of North Fork. The Council has been successfully managing multiple grants since being establishment nine years ago – and is a 501 (c)3 non-profit. Grants have ranged from \$500 to \$266,830, been of varying levels of complexity, and most have covered multiple years for implementation. The Council's annual grant management budget has grown from \$120,000 in 2001-2002 to an estimated \$646,000 for 2010-2011. At this time, we have gained and successfully administered over \$1,200,000 in grants.

The Council utilizes Quick Books Pro for grant tracking, have established financial management policies and internal controls that meet GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles), and have revised our bookkeeping system to meet the needs of our growing organization and our funders.

The Council currently has an Executive Director, one half-time Administrative Assistant, one half-time Tribal Liaison, one full-time Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA), and full-time assistance from a Natural Resources Conservation Service RC&D Coordinator. Two additional VISTA's have just completed their one year terms with us – and another Vista Volunteer will be added in the 2010 / 2011 fiscal year. The Council has the office space and capacity to employ personnel as needed to implement and administer a large grant such as the SSIRWMP project. We also have access to many highly qualified candidates for Project Manager, Facilitator and Grant Administrator positions, and are able to do effective outreach for additional candidates if needed.

#### **2. Capacity for financial tracking, invoicing, and reporting to DWR and the IRWMP:**

The Council has established financial management policies that meet GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles). As previously described, we have established a bookkeeping system using the Quick Books Pro program that meets the needs of our growing organization and our funders. We have successfully tracked numerous grants, prepared documentation, invoiced for payments, issued payments for supplies and services, and completed accomplishment reports for our funders for the last nine years. We have always followed the procedures required of our various funders.

and have successfully met their requirements. We follow the Federal OMB (Office of Management and Budget) Circular A-110, A-122 and A-133 requirements for grant management.

**3. Proven financial grant management track record with state, federal, and/or private entities:**

The Council has received and successfully implemented grants from many Federal, State and Local funders including: the Natural Resources Conservation Service; US Forest Service; National Park Service; Bureau of Reclamation; Sierra Nevada Conservancy; California Association of Resource Conservation Districts; California Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils; **California** Department of Environmental Health; and many more. We have been the fiscal agent for Central Sierra Watershed Committee, Yosemite West Property and Homeowners Association; Foresta Township; and California Amer-Asian Resource Education (CARE).

Projects managed have included the following:

- *Watershed Planning* - Developing educational materials, preparing funding proposals and assisting with related studies and activities as needed
- *Fire Hazard Reduction* – Collaborating on project development, gaining funding, preparing contracts, developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans, cooperatively implementing fuels reduction projects, administering grants and contracts, developing educational materials and establishing a community chipping program for seniors and disabled residents
- *Agri-Nature Tourism* - Establishing steering committees to promote opportunities that support or rural communities, developing a series of related small business development workshops, putting on the workshops and assisting entrepreneurs with planning and putting on Agri-Nature Tourism events
- *Planning and Putting on Conferences* – Hosting a statewide Biomass Utilization conference, the Pacific Rim Regional Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils conference, and a California Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils conference (150 - 200 attendees each)
- *Developing "Welcome to the Foothills" Booklets* – Creating educational materials to provide information for property owners on how to care for their lands to conserve natural resources, completing 3 different county versions, preparing a fourth county version and sharing the template with 6 other counties
- *Working with the Corporation for National and Community Service* - Hosting a total of ten VISTA's, assisting our Council and our partners with capacity building, and developing and implementing projects that help to sustain our natural resources and support economic viability of our rural communities (\$250,000 value)

We are beginning a project in partnership with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy with funding from Rural Development to assist small business start-ups relating to Biomass Utilization.

We have implemented over \$1,200,000 in grants to date, and all associated programs and projects have been successfully completed. We have a proven track record for leveraging small grants to complete larger projects, and effectively managing a complex multiple grant program.

**4. Has the required insurance for state grants:**

The Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D currently carries Directors and Officers, and General Liability insurance to cover our project activities (up to \$1,000,000 each). We will purchase additional insurance as needed to meet state requirements for this grant.

**5. Has, or can put in place, financial and organizational policies that meet state criteria (Drug-free Workplace, Accrual v. Cash Accounting):**

The Council has established Drug Free Workplace, Conflict of Interest, Personnel Management, Financial Management, Equal Opportunity and other policies that meet the State and Federal Requirements.

As a non-profit organization, we have been operating under a modified cash basis. Projects are implemented on a cash basis, and finished with project reports completed on the accrual basis.

**Selection Criteria to Consider for Fiscal Sponsor Candidates**

**1. Political acceptance from range of stakeholders representing different interests across the region that fiscal sponsor can represent the best interests of all stakeholders when acting in the capacity of fiscal sponsor for the Madera County IRWMP:**

The Council has broad representation that compliments the Madera County IRWMP group – as well as the Mariposa and Southern Sierra IRWMP groups. Council sponsors consist of the following representatives:

- Madera, Mariposa, Fresno and Tulare County Boards of Supervisors,
- North Fork Mono and Picayune Rancherias of Madera County – as well as, Big Sandy and Cold Springs Rancherias and Tule River Indian Reservation
- Coarsegold and Chowchilla Red Top Resource Conservation Districts of Madera County; the Mariposa and Tulare County RCDs – and Sierra RCD of eastern Fresno County
- Eastern Madera County and Mariposa County Fire Safe Councils – as well as the Sequoia, Highway 168, Oak to Timberline Fire Safe Councils,
- California Amer-Asian Resource Education (C.A.R.E.),
- North Fork Community Development Council in Madera County
- Madera County Economic Development Department – as well as Mariposa, Fresno and Tulare County EDDs
- Sierra Foothill Conservancy of Madera, Mariposa and Fresno Counties
- Sierra Vista Scenic Byway Committee of eastern Madera County

In addition, we work cooperatively with adjacent Resource Conservation and Development Councils (Desert Mountain, Central Sierra and San Joaquin Valley) and are a member of the Sierra Nevada Coalition of Resource Conservation and Development Councils.

We work closely with many partners including: federal agencies (US Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Rural Development, and National Park Service); state agencies

(Cal Fire, Department of Fish and Game, and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy); California Fire Safe Council, UC Cooperative Extension Service, local chambers of commerce, agri-nature tourism committees, watershed councils (Central Sierra, Upper Merced River), Fresno State University, the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative, and more. We have built and maintain positive relationships with sponsors and partners, and are committed to outreach to underserved populations to provide better service for our communities, identify significant issues and connect with potential partners.

Our Sponsor members and specifically representative from the Madera County Boards of Supervisors strongly support the Council acting as the fiscal agent for this project.

**2. Geographic representation of the region or at least the perception that the fiscal sponsor acts in the capacity to represent the interests of the entire region:**

Geographically the Council covers all of Mariposa County, and the eastern portions of Madera, Fresno, Tulare Counties, from 500 feet in elevation to the crest of the Sierras. This aligns well, with the boundaries of the Madera, Mariposa and the Southern Sierra IRWMPs falling within our area. As previously mentioned, we work collaboratively with partners from adjacent areas, as resources and related projects do not always follow the same boundaries. We have good relationships with our neighbors in the Sierra Nevada portion of Kern County through the Desert Mountain RC&D, with our valley below through the San Joaquin Valley RC&D.

Our sponsors and partners are diverse as described in 1. above, and our projects are diverse as described in 3. (page 2) Of the *Yes or No* section at the beginning of this qualifications statement. Resource Conservation and Development Councils are established to identify and address local natural resource conservation and community needs in the rural areas they represent, and this is what we do.

**3. Moderate overhead costs; versus high overhead:**

Based upon our understanding of the proposed planning grant, the Council believes that it can be the fiscal sponsor at an estimated 5% Overhead rate. This rate could be modified as needed based upon further discussion relating to actual grant amount and costs.

**4. Efficiency with grant administration, contracting, management and invoicing :**

As previously described, the Council has managed many grants over the last nine years. Our staff has worked to become proficient at grant management and administration which includes all aspects of fiscal accountability from having sound financial management policies and practices, to establishing bookkeeping methods that reflect what is going on with the grant in understandable terms, and having built in internal controls to ensure proper use of funds. Our council utilizes Quick Books Pro, and our staff is able to efficiently produce reports, invoices and other documentation as needed. We have prepared and implemented contracts as needed for our projects, and we utilize the OMB Circulars A-110, A-122 and A-133, as well as other rules and regulations for financial management of grants as appropriate.

**5. Ability to meet quick deadlines for grant applications for the IRWMP with the support of the project manager:**

In working with grantors, sponsors and partners over the last nine years, the Council has always maintained the ability and met short turnaround deadlines for grant applications and special projects as needed. We have assisted many partners with preparing grant applications and providing support letters on short notice.

Examples:

- With one week notice, we prepared a proposal to NRCS for hiring a Tribal Liaison to assist with the formation of Tribal Resource Conservation Districts. The grant was received and agreements completed, the position was advertised, interviews were held, the position was filled, and the person began working with the tribes in less than a months' time.
- We recently had a couple of opportunities to collaborate with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The first was to apply for a Rural Development Grant to support small business start-ups relating to Biomass Utilization. The grant was applied for with a two week notice. The second was to assist with an application to the National Forest Foundation to facilitate capacity building among stakeholders throughout our area. The turnaround on this request was one week.
- California Amer-Asian Resource Education (C.A.R.E.) requested assistance with preparing an Environmental Justice Grant application, which was completed and submitted in 10 days.
- Within two weeks of learning about Sierra Nevada Conservancy funding opportunities, the Council prepared three proposals which were funded.
- The Big Sandy Rancheria requested our assistance with preparing and submitting a pre-disaster Planning grant from FEMA. The proposal was completed and submitted within 10 days, and \$500,000 was allocated for the project.

Our preference is to prepare proposals in advance and we make every effort to respond quickly to opportunities as they arise. We are also flexible and responsive to short turnaround requests when needed.

**6. Experience managing multi-stakeholder collaborative processes with facilitation support:**

In order to organize, apply and be authorized by Congress as a Resource Conservation and Development Council, we held a series of public forums to identify local resource conservation and community development needs. We continue to collect public input and work collaboratively with partners to identify needs, plan projects to address those needs, seek funding to implement the projects, and develop our Area (strategic five year) Plans and Annual Plans of Work. We have utilized the support of skilled facilitators to enhance the collaborative process.

Our quarterly Council meetings; which involve many stakeholders, are held throughout the four counties we serve. They are open to the public to encourage dialogue about local environmental and community development issues. Individuals and other organizations are invited to share project ideas and request assistance from the Council.

We have helped to establish such groups as the Yosemite Gateway Partnership, the Sequoia and Kings Canyon Gateway Partnership, the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative, the Sierra Nevada Coalition of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, the Mariposa County Agri-Nature Tourism Committee, and California Amer-Asian Resource Education. Establishing these groups has involved multi-stakeholder collaboration and facilitated sessions to develop mission, vision, goals and objectives, and strategies to accomplish the goals and objectives.

**7. Water resource and watershed planning and program management experience:**

Water resource conservation and watershed planning are part of the core of our organization. The Council was initially formed by the Central Sierra Watershed Committee, when the group recognized the need to work regionally to address the myriad of environmental and community needs. The Council has continued to collaborate on watershed planning efforts, and has gained and administered funding for the Central Sierra Watershed Committee since our establishment.

We have a number of stakeholders, Council members and officers that have been directly involved with watershed programs and projects throughout our region with the state of California Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board and CalFed Bay Delta Watershed Program. Names may be provided upon request. The combined value of these programs has been over \$2,000,000 dollars for our region.

**8. Capacity to hire employees or consultants in a timely manner:**

The Council has the capacity to hire employees and consultants as needed. We currently have access to several potential candidates for employment, that are skilled at watershed planning, and implementing watershed enhancement projects, as well as managing and administering a variety of other resource and community projects. We have conducted outreach for several positions, have interviewed and hired employees as needed, and have established personnel practices. We are familiar with and follow state and federal employment rules and regulations. We have also prepared contracts with consultants and contractors for projects as needed.