



# State of California

## National Disaster Resilience Competition

Phase II  
October 27, 2015



CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION  
AGENCY



SIERRA NEVADA  
CONSERVANCY



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Exhibit A:  
Executive Summary

[ExhibitAExecutiveSummary.pdf](#)



## **EXHIBIT A – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2013 Rim Fire destroyed 257,314 acres of land in Tuolumne County, and ranks as the third largest wildfire in State history. The fire burned for over two months through large portions of Stanislaus National Forest, threatening surrounding communities and damaging the [critical watershed that supplies water to local communities, the San Joaquin Valley, and the City and County of San Francisco](#). The Rim Fire had a direct emergency response cost of \$127 million and estimates of environmental damage range up to \$736 million.

Unfortunately, the Rim Fire is not an isolated incident. In September 2015, the Valley and Butte Fires burned over 145,000 acres, destroyed 2,728 structures and resulted in 7 deaths. As of September 26, 2015, wildfires have burned over 115,000 more acres across California than burned in all of 2014, and almost 200,000 more acres than the five year average ([CAL FIRE](#)). California's prolonged severe drought and related epidemic tree mortality magnifies risk, as the conditions for rapid fire expansion are all-too-ripe.

These fires have serious consequences for local communities, including public health impacts, property damage, and economic disruption. At the same time, these fires also threaten the upper watersheds that form the backbone of the State's water system. Sixty percent of the State's water supply originates in California's Sierra Nevada region, falling first through the forest canopy and understory, residing temporarily as snow pack, filtering through soil, before flowing into networks of rivers, reservoirs, and aquifers, and finally, reaching taps on farms and in homes, schools, and businesses state-wide. Wildfire is not the only risk to watersheds; climate models project a future with declining snowpack, rising temperatures, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme events, including

wildfire. Preparing for these changes as the state's population grows to 50 million requires a replicable, innovative, and collaborative program for watershed management and resilience.

The NDRC has provided a unique opportunity to design and, if funded, implement an integrated, replicable model for community and watershed resilience. The Community and Watershed Resilience Program (CWRP) provides an innovative, revenue-generating, scalable, and replicable model that can serve myriad similar regions throughout the Western United States. Developed in partnership with federal and local government agencies, community organizations, and private business, the CWRP is built around partnerships and practices designed to overcome the financial and institutional barriers to sustainable, healthy forests and watersheds. The CWRP will also facilitate the transition to a sustainable forest economy in our rural communities. The State of California has partnered with Tuolumne County and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) to lead this effort. We have engaged with local businesses, non-profit organizations, community groups, and education leaders to identify unmet recovery needs and to develop a program for community and ecological resilience in the immediate and surrounding areas.

The [State of California's Community and Watershed Health Resilience Program](#) is composed of activities in three integrated pillars:

1. Forest and Watershed Health: thinning, biomass removal, restoration, and reforestation activities in the Rim Fire burn area. Given the certainty of an uncertain future of drought, climate change and wildfire, these activities are designed to improve forest and watershed health and resilience against disturbances.



2. **Integrated Biomass and Wood Products Facility:** This facility will provide clean power, cooling and heating, and a wood products facility to utilize biomass material removed from the impacted disaster area. The facility will serve the Rim Fire recovery area, and act as a regional facility to accept thinned biomass from Tuolumne and surrounding counties.
3. **Community Resilience Centers:** Designed to increase community resilience, these facilities will provide services during an emergency and also provide year-round services, including education and job training to support forest and watershed work and the biomass facility. These facilities will be a model for serving rural communities.

Each of these pillars and activities build resilience individually, but implemented together, they create an economically- and environmentally-sustainable model for community and watershed resilience that reduces the risk of fire and supports local economic development. Through program design and implementation we will work with partners to build a program roadmap and support development of innovative financing tools to facilitate the replicability and scalability of the program.

The State of California, in partnership with Tuolumne County and the USFS, is pleased to present the Phase II application for the National Disaster Resilience Competition. The Community and Watershed Resilience Program is a model for forest and watershed recovery and resilience. To magnify the benefits of the Program, California is leveraging funds from the USFS's Rim Fire recovery funds, investments through the State's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, State Water Bond Funds, and programs to support bioenergy. The total project cost request is \$117 million; the benefit-cost ratio is 1.53. All



documentation is located at links within this document or on [HCD's NDRC Application Documents webpage](#).

