



Responses to Questions Regarding Request for Proposals for Environmental Consulting Services: CEQA Analysis for the South Yuba Rim Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, Phase 1

Proposal Format

Are proposers who were not directly sent a copy of the RFP still eligible to submit?

Yes. The RFP was posted publicly on the Yuba Watershed Institute (YWI) website as well as by the County of Nevada through the Public Purchase online clearinghouse.

Do resumes count towards the 15-page limit? Or are they considered attachment?

The org chart and concise resumes would be part of the 15-page proposal. If proposers want to include a more detailed resume this can be sent as an attachment, which would not count towards the 15-page limit.

Would you like the proposal to be in the order listed in the RFP (Cost Proposal, Approach, Staffing, Work Plan, Schedule, and Experience, Qualifications, and References) or is it acceptable for the proposer to adjust the order as needed?

The proposer can adjust the order as needed.

Roles and Responsibilities

Who is the CEQA lead agency for the project? What are the roles of the other stakeholders?

The County of Nevada is the “project proponent” as defined by the CalVTP and will act the lead agency under CEQA because an addendum to the Program EIR is required. The YWI, as the non-governmental organization with the primary responsibility for implementing treatments and standard project requirements, will be considered the “implementing entity” as defined by the CalVTP. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the funder and will also act as the lead agency for NEPA following their own internal Environmental Historic Preservation (EHP) [review process](#). The following additional stakeholders are acting in an advisory/review capacity: CAL FIRE, North San Juan Fire Protection District, and several Firewise Communities.

Who will be preparing the treatment description/prescriptions for the CalVTP PSA?

The YWI will be preparing the project description, proposed treatment activities, and treatment prescriptions and will provide these to the contractor chosen for providing the services in the RFP's scope of work (Contractor). This information will be developed in consultation with the project's Steering Committee, which includes representatives from all of the major stakeholders. Draft treatment activities and prescriptions will be reviewed by a Registered Professional Forester prior to finalization. The project team will be deferring to the Contractor for guidance on the level of detail needed in the project description for the CalVTP PSA.

Will the selected Contractor be expected to conduct community outreach and engagement? Do you anticipate community engagement to be in-person, virtual, or a mix of both?

Community engagement is not part of the scope of work for this RFP. The YWI and County of Nevada are taking the lead on this piece. It was mentioned in the project background section of the RFP so that proposers would have an idea of all the tasks that Phase 1 entails and how their work would fit into context. The only interface the Contractor will have with the community will be through communications with individual landowners to coordinate access for surveys.

Will the Right of Entry Agreements be secured by YWI, or is that something that should be included in the proposal?

Yes, the ROE agreements will be secured by the YWI. We are in the process of obtaining these right now, and have a (soft) deadline of August 15, 2024 to receive them back.

We understand that landowners will sign Right of Entry Agreements to allow access to their properties for this work. Can you provide more detail on what access information the YWI Project Manager already has from these landowners, and what type of coordination will be required of the Contractor? This will assist in determining the level of effort needed to coordinate access details.

We have signed ROE agreements (or a commitment to sign) from 124 parcels to date, representing 52% of the project planning area. We expect more in the coming weeks. The Project Manager prefers to be the main contact with landowners to schedule access for surveys. They have a questionnaire that landowners will fill out via email, or they will call to get answers over the phone, since some landowners don't have email access. Once the Project Manager gets this information they will forward it to the consultant. Depending on the availability of both the Contractor and the landowner, the Contractor may need to do some communication to confirm survey information and times. The earlier the Contractor gives the project manager their preference for survey access, the more the project manager will be able to help.

Scope of Work - General

For visual impact surveys, is there a preferred visual resources methodology that you would like to see followed? And would you like to see visual simulations in the assessment?

The project team does not have a preferred methodology for visual impact assessment. This is required information for FEMA's Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) review process. For other similar FEMA projects, the County of Nevada has worked with local/technical experts to identify 10 representative areas within the project area to include for visual impact surveys.

Would surveys (biological, cultural, visual) all be anticipated for the full 6,900-acre planning area, with protocol-level biological surveys only on the ~800-acre treatment area?

That is correct. The reconnaissance-level biological surveys, cultural resource surveys, and visual impact surveys would be performed for the full planning area (which could be somewhat less than 6,900 acres, depending on rate of landowner participation). The special-status plant surveys (and pre-treatment studies such as sensitive natural communities surveys) would be performed for the approx. 800-acre Phase 2 treatment area.

Are there any existing surveys or records searches of the area that could be utilized for reference?

Some landowners have mentioned to the Project Manager that they have had surveys completed for CFIP or EQIP grants. We have made notes of these landowners and can ask them to share the survey information with the Contractor. There may be some landowners we haven't had contact with yet who might also have surveys. However, we don't know how many or how helpful these survey data will be.

How much of the 6,900 acre project area is within the "treatable landscape" (in acres or percent). Can you publish a GIS-shapefile showing the project area and the noncompliant areas?

Approximately 90% of the project planning area is within the Cal VTP treatable landscape. About 630 acres have been identified as outside of the treatable landscape. A shapefile is available upon request.

Can you indicate the budget you have for this ambitious project?

We believe the budget is more than adequate for the tasks described in the RFP. Costs will be only one consideration when RFP responses are reviewed. Proposers should include all costs that are necessary to provide the services as described. At this point we cannot provide a budget cap or estimated project costs.

Scope of Work - Biological

Do you anticipate needing a Biological Assessment? Should this be included as optional add-ons in the proposal?

The project team's current understanding is that a biological assessment is not required to support FEMA's EHP review process. However, proposers can add this as an optional add-on in case FEMA provides different guidance at some point in the review process. It should be noted that a Biological Assessment for California spotted owl is being prepared for the project using separate grant funds and under a different RFP (not yet released). This Biological Assessment will not be completed until the end of 2026.

Will the spotted owl data constraints be given to the Contractor? When would they be available?

Data on spotted owl nest locations, breeding status, and protected activity centers will not be available until two years of surveys have been completed (at the end of 2026). Therefore, they will not be available during the timeframe of this scope of work.

Should the cost proposal assume no fuel treatment will occur in riparian habitat and therefore not require riparian permitting such as jurisdictional delineations, Lake or Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement, etc.?

No, there may be treatments in riparian areas but they will follow CalVTP requirements such as SPR BIO-4 (*Design Treatment to Avoid Loss or Degradation of Riparian Habitat Function*) and SPR HYD-4 (*Identify and Protect Watercourse and Lake Protection Zones*). It is our understanding that these activities do not require any additional permitting, although consultation with California Fish and Wildlife Service may determine otherwise. Riparian habitats and WLPZs have not yet been identified, so it is difficult to say with certainty what will be required.

Should the cost proposal assume that if special-status species are found, avoidance will occur and therefore no additional permitting would be required for special status species?

Yes. Consultation between FEMA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be conducted during FEMA's EHP review process and may require a letter of concurrence (e.g., for California spotted owl), but this will take place after the completion of this scope of work.

Would you like the proposals to include costs for nesting bird surveys for up to 800 acres?

No, nesting bird surveys will take place immediately prior to implementation and will be part of Phase 2 (not part of this scope of work).

Do you have any assumptions regarding the timing and pace that fuel treatment would occur, such as acres of treatment that would be completed per day and how many days fuel treatment would occur for?

There will be an 18-month timeline for project implementation during Phase 2, which is slated to begin in late 2026 at the earliest. Project work may be limited to 6 to 12 months within this window, depending on when the 18 months begin, because of the limited operating period for California spotted owl nesting season. This may require treating up to 130 acres per month if only 6 months are available, which means over 6 acres per day during this timeframe. Again, services related to these treatments will occur in a later phase of the project and are not included in this scope of work.

Scope of Work – Cultural Resources

Is a Section 106 cultural resources report needed?

For Section 106 compliance, this is what FEMA has required for other similar projects:

- *Pedestrian Surveys:* Prior to conducting fieldwork, the contracted archaeologist(s) will conduct a pre-field desktop review to determine the areas that are paved or fully developed and eliminate those areas from the field survey effort. Archaeologists will conduct archaeological pedestrian surveys only of the remaining relevant previously un-surveyed areas.
- *Pre-Field Review and Resource Types:* Prior to the start of fieldwork, archaeologists will prepare an ArcGIS online (AGOL) map and review the record search results data and project components to determine which portions of the un-surveyed project area are suitable for survey (i.e., areas with visible soil [not paved] and/or have potential to present undisturbed soils), as well as areas with higher potential for cultural resources sensitivity based on the archaeological, ethnographic, and historical patterns in the region and patterns of site distribution according to the record search results. Any input provided by the RPF will be taken into account. The AGOL map will be uploaded to a tablet to guide the field crew during the survey.
- *Survey and Recording:* The archaeological field crew will survey the project area by walking the site area in parallel transects spaced no more than 5 meters apart. The crew will use pin flags to mark all surface archaeological features, artifacts, and ecofacts. To prevent drawing attention to sensitive archaeological resources, no flags will remain overnight, or for extended periods of time during the day in areas accessible to the public. Transect spacing may be enlarged or reduced to facilitate the recordation of features and boundaries within sites with dense vegetation (or other ground cover that limits visibility).
- *Reporting:* Upon completion of the fieldwork, a Cultural Resources Technical Report (CRTR) will be prepared. The CRTR will meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines and will follow *Archaeological Resource Management Reports (ARMR): Recommended Contents and Format* (California OHP 1990) and achieve compliance as it relates to cultural resources with

Section 106 of the NHPA and NEPA. The CRTR will contain relevant regulatory setting, context, description of methods, and field survey results.

Please confirm the scope of work is just for a cultural inventory and does not include an evaluation for state and federal eligibility.

In general, for questions such as this we would defer to the requirements of the CalVTP. To our knowledge, the CalVTP standard project requirements for cultural resources do not include evaluation for state or federal eligibility, therefore it would not be included in the scope of work.

Please confirm that the cost estimate should include the estimated fee for the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) record search.

Yes, the cost estimate should include the estimated fee for the CHRIS record search.

Would the Contractor be responsible for completing the CalVTP PEIR measure SPR CUL-2 (*Contact Geographically Affiliated Native American Tribes*)?

If possible, it would be preferable if the chosen contractor completes SPR CUL-2 on behalf of the project proponent (County of Nevada).

Are any archaeological permits required? We realize that private lands do not require permits, but we'd like to confirm that no federal or state lands will be involved therefore requiring archaeological permits.

No federal or state lands are included in the project planning area, therefore no archaeological permits are required.