

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/30/2020 7:00:00 AM

First name: Ed

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Organization: Tuolumne Utilities District

Title: General Manager

Comments: Dear Mr. Kuiken:

Tuolumne Utilities District (TUD or District) strongly supports the proposed Social and Ecological Resilience Across the Landscape (SERAL) project collaboration between the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) and the Stanislaus National Forest.

Tuolumne Utilities District is the largest water and wastewater utility in Tuolumne County. The District's Treated Water Service Area is primarily characterized by residential land use, with a mixture of commercial, institutional (i.e., hospitals, jails, schools, etc.), agricultural, and industrial land uses. The TUD Treated Water System is the primary treated water system in Tuolumne County currently serving a population of over 31,000 persons, or over 60-percent of the County's overall population, yet the District's water supply is an extremely vulnerable water delivery system that was originally constructed by miners during the Gold Rush era. The Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) Tuolumne Main Canal is a wooden flume roughly 16 miles in total length from Lyons Reservoir on the South Fork of the Stanislaus River to the Phoenix Forebay. The Tuolumne Main Canal water conveyance system serves as the only water supply delivery system to Tuolumne County. Recent reports list Tuolumne County as the county having the highest wildfire risk in California and remains a major threat to the Tuolumne Main Canal. Protecting the District's watershed and infrastructure from the threat of wildfire is of great concern. Destruction of the wooden flume system would cut off approximately 95% of the water supply to the majority of the residents of Tuolumne County.

The SERAL project would benefit the entire community of Tuolumne County and help protect the watersheds of the Middle and South Forks Stanislaus River. After reviewing the project's Strategic Fire Management Map, it is clear this project would build a much needed fuel break and vegetation management plan to reduce the fire risk to vulnerable communities, provide more protection for the Tuolumne Main Canal area and create a more resilient forest by reducing accumulated fuels in the forest landscape.

As the SERAL project continues to progress, TUD will actively participate and engage as a collaborative partner. The District looks forward to collaborating with all the project partners to achieve the successful completion of this very important resiliency project.