



NORTH COAST RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP
2020 DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS GUIDELINES
FEBRUARY 2020



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1. BACKGROUND

The [North Coast Resource Partnership](#) (NCRP) was awarded \$4.25 million in block grant funding from the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) and Department of Conservation for the identification, planning and implementation of local and regional projects to improve forest health and increase fire resiliency. Funded by Cap-and-Trade revenues through California Climate Investments, the [Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program \(RFFC\)](#) aims to help communities prioritize, develop, and implement projects strengthen fire resiliency, increase carbon sequestration, and facilitate greenhouse gas reductions. The program is one element of the state's efforts to improve forest health, protect communities from wildfire risk and implement the [California Forest Carbon Plan](#) and [Executive Order B-52-18](#). The goal of the forestry block grant awarded to the NCRP is to develop a North Coast Regional Priority Plan (RPP) that will include a comprehensive and integrated set of strategies, actions and projects to support forest and community health and long-term resilience to wildfire. Please see the [NCRP Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Block Grant Work Plan](#) for more information.

Nearly \$1.8 million of the funding will go to fund demonstration processes and on-the-ground projects designed to test concepts, methods, and innovative techniques to identify effective management practices for fuel load reduction and forest health that can be quantified and scaled up in the region and elsewhere. Sub-grants for demonstration projects will be allocated based on the project's ability to achieve the goals of fuel load reduction, long term forest and ecosystem health, local jobs and revenue, workforce development, support for local infrastructure, innovation and capacity enhancement. The NCRP expects to issue subgrant agreements for demonstration projects in two rounds of funding during the spring of 2020 and all projects will need to be completed by July 30, 2021. All demonstration project activities must be conducted within the boundary of the NCRP region.

The NCRP is committed to transparency, stakeholder inclusion and process improvement. At the April 26, 2019 NCRP Quarterly meeting, the Policy Review Panel (PRP) directed the formation of an NCRP Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program Ad Hoc Committee comprised of Policy Review Panel (PRP) and Technical Peer Review Committee (TPRC) members to advise on the implementation of the CNRA block grant. The NCRP Forestry Ad Hoc met on July 30 and January 19 to provide input and direction to staff for the development of the NCRP RPP and soliciting request for proposals for demonstration projects and technical advisors. See the [NCRP Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Planning webpage](#) for more information.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE NCRP PROJECT EVALUATION ROLES

POLICY REVIEW PANEL

The [Policy Review Panel](#) (PRP) is the governing and decision-making body for the North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP). The composition of the PRP and decision-making process is defined in Section 5.4 of the NCRP [Memorandum of Mutual Understandings](#) (MoMU). The role of the PRP in the NCRP project review and selection process is to set the policy, decision making criteria and framework for the process and to ensure that the process is fair, open and transparent. As the decision-making body, the PRP provides direction about how the project evaluation and selection process aligns with the NCRP priorities by defining project review and

selection guidelines (see *PRP Directed Guidelines for Project Scoring and Selection* section). Considering the review and recommendations from the Technical Peer Review Committee, the PRP takes final action to approve all projects included in the NCRP and approves the region's highest priority projects. As defined in the MoMU, and the [NCRP Leadership Handbook](#), the PRP is subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act and is committed to transparency and inclusion, supporting input from stakeholders from throughout the region. All NCRP meetings are noticed in advance, open to the public, and all meeting summaries and information are posted on the [NCRP website](#).

TECHNICAL PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE

The [Technical Peer Review Committee](#) (TPRC) is advisory to the PRP and evaluates and makes recommendations based on technical expertise and scientific data. The composition of the TPRC is defined in the NCRP [MoMU](#) and is subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act. The TPRC is comprised of technical and agency staff with expertise that includes fisheries, ecology, engineering, agriculture, geology, conservation, watershed planning and forestry management, and water infrastructure. The role of the TPRC in the project review and selection process is to evaluate projects for technical merit based on their professional judgment and expertise, as well as on guidelines developed by the PRP and set by the funding solicitation. The TPRC prepares a draft suite of priority projects for review by the PRP. Scoring criteria and evaluation summaries from the TPRC are available for public review. TPRC Co-Chairs facilitate the project review meetings to ensure integrity in the process and presents the draft suite of priority projects to the PRP during the NCRP meeting.

NCRP STAFF

The role of NCRP staff during the project application, review and selection process is to facilitate and coordinate the process. Staff develops and coordinates project application materials; performs outreach and makes information available to the PRP, TPRC and stakeholders; clarifies outstanding issues; makes sure decisions are understood; maintains records; consolidates and summarizes TPRC review of project grant applications, and performs fact checking of state guidelines and criteria as necessary. Per the direction of the PRP, staff will support project proponents in developing the application materials where timing allows and in accordance with the source funding proposal process and eligibility requirements.

3. SCHEDULE FOR THE PROJECT SOLICITATION, PROPOSAL REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS

- **FEBRUARY 13:** The NCRP announces the 2020 Round 1 Demonstration Project Concept Proposal Solicitation via the [NCRP website](#) and eblast.
- **MARCH 13:** Due date for the NCRP 2020 Round 1 Demonstration Project Concept Proposals.
- **MARCH 15 - 29:** TPRC Demonstration Project Concept Proposal review period.
- **MARCH 30:** TPRC Project Review and Scoring meeting to select a portfolio of priority projects as a TPRC recommendation to be presented to the PRP for final approval. As a public meeting, project proponents and the public are welcome to attend the TPRC Project Review Meetings and provide public comment where noted on the published agenda.

- **APRIL 3:** PRP consider/approve TPRC recommended suite of Priority NCRP 2020 Round 1 Demonstration Project
- **MAY 8:** Priority NCRP 2020 Round 1 Demonstration Project sponsors work with NCRP staff to develop detailed scopes and budgets and finalize sub-grant agreements.
- **MAY:** The NCRP announces the 2020 Round 2 Demonstration Project Concept Proposal Solicitation via the [NCRP website](#) and eblast.
- **JULY 30, 2021:** NCRP 2020 Demonstration Projects are completed.

4. NCRP PROJECT CONCEPT PROPOSAL APPLICATION, REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS

The NCRP project application, review and selection process is a multi-step process:

a) **NCRP Demonstration Project Concept Proposal Solicitation**

At the direction of the PRP and when there is a funding opportunity, a call for proposals will be announced to North Coast stakeholders. The PRP or authorized Ad Hoc Committee will review and refine the PRP directed guidelines and criteria for project scoring and selection based on NCRP goals and objectives, specific regional priorities and funding source requirements and preferences. Staff will develop and make available Project Solicitation application materials based on the NCRP priorities and the funding source solicitation and requirements. The project concept proposal Request for Proposal materials will include detailed instructions and templates for developing a 5-page concept proposal, budget & schedule and a clear description of evaluation criteria. Project applicants will provide proposal materials to NCRP staff via email.

b) **Individual TPRC review of NCRP Project Applications**

Staff will compile and provide application materials to the TPRC for review and scoring along with scoring/evaluation forms. A TPRC project evaluation conference call meeting will be held prior to the TPRC project review period or shortly after it has commenced, to discuss the general review process and go over scoring definitions to ensure calibration and clarity. When packaging the project application materials for the TPRC members, a system will be developed to randomize chronology of the project applications that TPRC members review so that project applications in different order. The TPRC members will strive to individually review and score the NCRP project applications for technical merit based on criteria as defined by the funding solicitation, NCRP PRP defined guidelines (*see PRP Directed Guidelines for Project Scoring and Selection section*) and their professional expertise and judgment. TPRC members will review all projects referred to them unless they recuse themselves due to a potential conflict of interest. TPRC members will provide individual scores to staff for compilation. Time allowance for the individual TPRC review of project applications will be at least 2 weeks depending on the proposal solicitation timeframe. If two weeks is not available, the Executive Committee will determine the suitable duration to meet grant solicitation needs.

c) Group TPRC review of NCRP Project Applications

Staff will compile all individual scores submitted by TPRC members prior to the group TPRC review meeting, to determine an initial average project score; these scores are meant to facilitate discussion and will be presented at the TPRC meeting. Please note, the initial scores may not represent all TPRC scores and thus should not be interpreted as an official preliminary score. Adhering to a high standard of professional conduct, TPRC members and staff will meet to discuss each project and may adjust their individual scores based on the group discussion. To ensure a comprehensive project proposal review process, TPRC member in-person attendance is strongly encouraged at this meeting. It is recommended that all TPRC members bring laptops to the review session to ensure an efficient and thorough review. Staff will compile all updated TPRC individual scores to determine an updated average project score. TPRC review meetings are open to project proponents and the public. The agenda at a formally noticed public meeting will include a thorough review of the NCRP Conflict of Interest Guidelines as well as time for comment from the public (*see Conflict of Interest and Public Input Guidelines sections below*). All meeting deliberations, project scores, applicant and public input and recusals will be recorded.

d) TPRC Selection of Draft Suite of NCRP Priority Projects

During the project review meeting, the TPRC will select a draft suite of NCRP Priority Demonstration Projects and draft budget amounts for each project. The selection will be based on a number of factors including: technical project scores; project scalability and potential funding allowance; the overall balance of projects based on the PRP's defined guidelines for project selection (*see PRP Directed Guidelines for Project Scoring and Selection section*); and the collective ability of the projects to meet NCRP goals and be competitive for the funding opportunity. All meeting deliberations, public input and Conflict of Interest recusals will be recorded in the meeting summary.

e) PRP Review, Consideration and Final Approval of the Suite of NCRP Priority Demonstration Projects

The NCRP PRP will convene a Brown Act compliant in-person meeting held within the North Coast boundary to present, review and approve the final list of NCRP Priority Projects. During a NCRP meeting, the TPRC will provide a summary of the project review process and present their recommended draft suite of NCRP Priority Projects. The PRP will review, may amend and will approve by majority vote a final suite of NCRP Priority Projects. During the PRP's review of the draft suite of NCRP Priority Projects, the TPRC will answer questions and provide information as requested by the PRP. The PRP – comprised of elected public officials or their designees and elected Tribal representatives – will make their final decision based on TPRC recommendations, PRP guidelines and other factors that they believe represent the best interest of the North Coast region. The NCRP Priority Projects list will be posted to the website and made available to the public. Project review scores and review meeting materials will be made available to the project proponents and to the general public, upon request.

f) NCRP Priority Demonstration Project Contracting

Within 4 weeks of Priority Project selection and notification, the staff managing the selected proposals will work closely with the NCRP staff team to develop a detailed scope of work, schedule, budget, and list of work products to be included in the project sub-agreement. The NCRP reserves the right to select

all or part of a demonstration project proposal and may request amendments to the proposal to ensure that the project demonstrates innovative approaches and methods and is transferrable to other parts of the region.

5. GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC AND PROJECT PROPONENT INPUT DURING THE PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS

All TPRC project review meetings will be noticed at least 72 hours in advance and will be open and welcoming to the public. A conference call-in number will be provided for project proponents so that they may listen to the meeting and provide input during the public comment period if desired. Staff will mute the phone during breaks and include a statement in the agenda. A time keeper can be assigned to ensure that the break times follow the agenda. The meeting agenda and background materials to be used in the TPRC's decision-making will be available at the meeting location, posted to the NCRP website 72 hours in advance of the meeting and mailed to any interested member of the public upon request.

All TPRC meeting agendas include time for public comment, which will typically be limited to 3 minutes for each speaker. Public Comment portions of the meeting are not meant to be interactive and TPRC members will not engage in discussion or debate an issue with any member of the public. Public comment and materials delivered to staff from the public will be published on the NCRP website in the meeting summary. Project proponents, interested stakeholders and members of the public will be invited to provide comment:

- on items not on the agenda;
- after the TPRC discusses the projects amongst themselves, but before the TPRC members submit their final scores
- after the TPRC develops their draft recommended list, but before the TPRC submits their final recommendation to the PRP

6. NCRP CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

The NCRP Conflict of Interest Policy will follow the [California Fair Political Practices Commission](#) (FPPC) guidelines and the intent of the guidelines to address obligations under the Political Reform Act's conflict of interest rules.

Under the FPPC rules, when a member has a conflict of interest with a specific project, that member must publicly disclose the specific nature of the conflict and recuse themselves (i.e. leave the room or remain silent) during discussion of that specific project. The FPPC guidelines seek to prevent conflicts of interest in two ways - disclosure and recusal.

"No public official at any level of state or local government shall make, participate in making or in any way attempt to use his official position to influence a governmental decision in which he knows or has reason to know he has a financial interest." (Political Reform Act; Gov. Code Section 87100)

"Assets and income of public officials which may be materially affected by their official actions should be disclosed and in appropriate circumstances the officials should be disqualified from acting in order that conflicts of interest may be avoided." (Gov. Code section 81002)

During the NCRP project review and selection process, TPRC and PRP members will disclose any potential financial interest in a project. If a TPRC or PRP member has a potential conflict of interest, they will be expected to recuse themselves (i.e. leave the room or remain silent) from making, participating in or in any way influencing a project scoring or selection decision.

In the interest of transparency, TPRC and PRP members will also disclose any history of contribution to the project including input in the grant development or project planning or other involvement that could potentially represent a real or perceived conflict of interest. Once disclosed, the TPRC and PRP member will determine whether these actions constitute a conflict of interest or will prevent an objective review of the NCRP implementation project(s) and will determine if recusal is necessary. The PRP or TPRC member may wish to request the advice of their colleagues on the PRP or TPRC to make their determination.

Opportunities for disclosure and reporting will occur during the individual TPRC review of NCRP projects, during the group TPRC project review and during the TPRC and PRP selection meetings. The project score sheets will include a checklist and comment box for TPRC members to disclose potential conflict of interest. Project review score sheets and meeting notes will document any conflict of interest disclosures and recusals. In addition, the TPRC Chair(s), or his/her designee, will be selected to provide oversight during the project review meetings and act as a facilitator of TPRC discussion should conflict of interest issues arise. The TPRC Chair(s), or his/her designee, will be supported by staff to ensure the process adheres to the Conflict of Interest Policy established by the PRP.

7. PRP DIRECTED GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT SCORING AND SELECTION

The intent of the following PRP-directed project scoring and selection guidelines is to promote the implementation of NCRP goals while allowing the flexibility to address specific regional priorities and funding source requirements. These guidelines are in addition to those defined by the NCRP goals & objectives and IRWM Program or other funding source guidelines and scoring criteria. The PRP includes the following preferences and priority considerations in its decision-making process:

Regional Representation

The PRP will make every effort to ensure geographic representation by including projects from each of the seven counties and from the north, central and southern Tribal areas of the North Coast Region. This guideline will apply only to those projects which are eligible for funding under the NCRP and other state and federal requirements, and which have met the technical criteria established by the Forestry Ad Hoc Committee and evaluated by the Technical Peer Review Committee.

Economically Disadvantaged Community ¹

In an effort to build capacity and extend services to communities that are under-served and/or limited by economic barriers, the TPRC will include screening criteria that will confer additional weight to projects that, in addition to meeting other NCRP criteria, will benefit North Coast disadvantaged communities. The PRP reserves the right to prioritize disadvantaged community projects, based on a project's ability to mitigate threats to public health, watershed health, and the economic and public health benefits that project implementation would bring to these communities.

Jurisdictional Notification & Coordination

Project applicants are required to demonstrate that they have notified counties and Tribes re: proposed projects in the proposed project impact area of a particular watershed or relevant area of County or Tribal interest. Project applicants are required to demonstrate coordination and outreach to potentially interested stakeholders including Tribes in the relevant watershed, sub-watershed or project impact area; including source and receiving water areas.

Programmatic Integration & Balance of Project Type to effectively implement NCRP goals

NCRP goals: To support local autonomy and encourage cooperation; enhance public health & economic vitality in disadvantaged communities; restore salmon populations; enhance beneficial uses of water; and promote energy independence, emissions reductions and climate change adaptation.

- a) All project types should address grant requirements and NCRP goals and priorities
- b) Programmatic integration and project type diversity will be achieved at the portfolio level - (e.g. small /individual projects not required to demonstrate integration of all priorities, yet they must contribute to a comprehensive suite of projects that achieve a multi-benefit, integrated program)
- c) Programmatic integration and project type diversity will be achieved over time and through multiple rounds of funding
- d) Projects that provide multi-benefits will be prioritized (where all else is equal)
- e) Projects that address specific targets as identified by the PRP, including specific North Coast objectives, challenges and opportunities (e.g., promote biomass-related projects, effective in-stream flow approaches, energy retrofits, drought or flood preparedness, effective instream flow approaches or specific funding opportunities) may be prioritized by the PRP

¹ Definition for: *Economically Disadvantaged Community (DAC)*: A community with an annual median household income (MHI) that is less than 80% of the statewide annual median household income.

Severely Economically Disadvantaged Community (SDAC): A community with an annual household income that is less than 60% of the statewide MHI.

Economically Distressed Area: A community with a population of 20,000 persons or less, a rural county, or a reasonably isolated and divisible segment of a larger area where the segment of the population is 20,000 persons or less, with an MHI that is less than 85 percent of the statewide median household income, and with one or more of the following conditions: (1) Financial hardship; (2) Unemployment rate at least 2 percent higher than the statewide average; (3) Low population density.

8. NCRP DEMONSTRATION PROJECT CONCEPT PROPOSAL SCORING CRITERIA

Please note that all Criteria are scored on a 0 – 10 basis, with a weighting factor applied where:

1. A score of 9-10 points will be awarded where the criterion is fully addressed, achieves significant outcomes and is supported by thorough and well-presented documentation & logical rationale.
2. A score of 7-8 points will be awarded where the criterion is addressed, achieves significant outcomes but is not supported by thorough documentation or sufficient rationale.
3. A score of 5-6 points will be awarded where the criterion is addressed, achieves moderate outcomes and is supported by thorough and well-presented documentation & logical rationale.
4. A score of 3-4 points will be awarded where the criterion is marginally addressed, achieves moderate outcomes but is not supported by thorough documentation or sufficient rationale.
5. A score of 1-2 point will be awarded where the criterion is marginally addressed, but achieves outcomes that are low in significance.
6. A score of 0 points will be awarded where the criterion is not addressed.

NCRP PROJECT PROPOSAL SCORING CRITERIA	WEIGHTING FACTOR	RANGE OF POINTS
<p>ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA</p> <p>Is the project sponsor an eligible grant applicant?</p> <p>Does the project address at least one of the NCRP Objectives?</p> <p>Is the project eligible for the current funding solicitation?</p> <p>Will the project be completed by July 2021?</p>	N/A	y/n
<p>PROPONENT CAPACITY INFORMATION</p> <p>Has the project proponent implemented similar projects in the past? Has the project sponsor worked effectively with the NCRP in the past?</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate that the sponsor/project team has the qualifications, experience, capacity, and commitment to the project goals to perform the proposed tasks successfully?</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate that the sponsor/project team can perform work in a cost-effective and efficient manner – proven ability to be creative in leveraging limited financial resources;</p>	2	<p>0 – 20</p> <p>(0-10 x 2)</p>
<p>PROJECT ALIGNMENT WITH NCRP & RFFC PROGRAM GOALS</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the North Coast region, the NCRP and its goals, objectives, and work accomplished to date; demonstrated understanding of the goals and objectives of the NCRP RFFC grant?</p> <p>Do the goals and objectives of the Project help to achieve the goals and objectives of the NCRP and the NCRP RFFC grant?</p>	2	<p>0 – 20</p> <p>(0 – 10 X 2)</p>

NCRP PROJECT PROPOSAL SCORING CRITERIA	WEIGHTING FACTOR	RANGE OF POINTS
<p>PROJECT INFORMATION</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate the project’s ability to model and share key practices?</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate he project’s ability to test new and innovative methods, tools and processes?</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate the project’s ability to be scaled up and applied to other areas in the region and state?</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate integration with community wildfire adaptation efforts?</p> <p>Does the proposal include a clear approach to measuring and reporting project effectiveness including data management, performance measures, and assessing project outcomes and lessons learned;</p> <p>Is the project ready to proceed?</p>	3	0 – 30 (0-10 x 3)
<p>PROJECT BUDGET</p> <p>Is the budget of adequate detail and completeness so that it is clear that the project can be implemented?</p>	1	0 – 10
<p>PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT AND PRP DIRECTED CRITERIA</p> <p>Is the project a good fit for the current funding solicitation?</p> <p>Is this an important project for the North Coast region and RFFC program? Does this project effectively implement the NCRP goals and objectives?</p> <p>Is there general agreement among the TPRC members regarding the ranking of this project?</p> <p>Can the project budget be scaled to be appropriate for this funding solicitation?</p>	1	0 – 10
TOTAL SCORE		0 – 90