

Mammoth Lakes Town Council

Agenda Action Sheet

Title: Approve the MOU between Blue Forest Finance Inc., World Resources Institute and Eastern Sierra Climate and Community Resilience Project – Wildfire Resilience Action Team (WRAFT), subject to final legal partner agency review.

Council Meeting Date: 2/7/2024

Prepared by: Daniel C. Holler, Town Manager

Recommended Motion: Approve the MOU between Blue Forest Finance Inc., World Resources Institute and Eastern Sierra Climate and Community Resilience Project – Wildfire Resilience Action Team (WRAFT), subject to final legal partner agency review.

Summary:

A key success of the Eastern Sierra Climate and Community Resilience Project (ESCCRP) is the ability to secure funding to support biomass fuels treatments and removal from the forest. The work program also supports actions to improve overall watershed and forest health. Representatives from several of the agencies engaged in the ESCCRP have been meeting over several months to work on a funding strategy and framework. The working group has branded itself as the “Wildfire Resilience Action Team (WRAFT).” The Whitebark Institute has provided the leadership and drive to move the ESCCRP work forward. The attached, nonbinding Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is the result of these efforts. The MOU is currently being circulated through the partner agencies. The Town of Mammoth Lakes has been committed to this wildfire fuels reduction and forest health initiative since inception. Staff is recommending approval of the MOU subject to final legal and partner agency review. If there are any substantive changes the MOU will be brought back to the Council for consideration.

The Town has supported the current work efforts by providing financial cash flow resources to support the initial work in Mammoth Lakes. The Town Council has approved a \$150,000 grant to the Whitebark Institute to support the financial capacity of the organization. The Town has also applied for grants to support the construction of a Bioenergy Plant that will be the primary means to consume the biomass generated from the project converting the material into electricity, including, most recently, an Economic Development Administration (EDA) \$21 million federal grant. The ongoing work of WRAFT will be to define strategies and funding sources to fund the fuels reduction work, forest restoration, and processing of materials generated.

The MOU provides a draft overview of initial roles and responsibilities of the partner agencies, which is generally reflective of current activities. The pace and scale of the ESCCRP will require a substantial investment of time and resources of the partner agencies to achieve the goals of the Project. The development of the proposed MOU reflects this effort and commitment.