



Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) Joint Powers Authority Agenda

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Kristen Pfeiler, ESCOG staff
Subject: Update on Community Wildfire Defense Grant Implementation

Meeting date: December 11, 2025
Attachments: None

DISCUSSION:

As we roll out the \$4.6 million US Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant, staff has been meeting with all major partners to finalize the budget, outline roles and responsibilities, and align resources for implementation. Below is a high-level update from those meetings:

- The Mono County Auditor will provide training and limited support for fiscal operations. Most of the CWDG grant administration and management will need to be handled by ESCOG staff. The Interim Mono County Finance Director suggests that ESCOG is need of a dedicated fiscal analyst or grant manager at this time.
- The Inyo County Project Management Office is facilitating conversations with Inyo Administration, Public Works, and composting partners about staffing the chipping crews and setting up composting operations. Inyo County will create two seasonal positions for chipping, and staff with Commercial Driver Licenses will be needed for hauling rolloff dumpsters. Recruitment for that role will be challenging, and partnerships are being explored. Conversations with Mono County Public Works are underway and a similar model will likely be adopted.
- Cerro Coso will assist with recruiting and workforce coordination for the new positions supported through this program.
- For fuel reduction crews, ESCOG staff has had discussions with Bishop Fire Chief Bret Russell and Fire Chief Ales Tomaier regarding the grant funding two new seasonal positions under Bishop Fire Department and one under Mammoth Lakes Fire Department and sustain existing crew positions for the Lone Pine and Bishop Tribes. These crews will need ESCOG staff support for coordination, reporting, and documentation.

Staff has presented the CWDG to the ESCOG Board, Mono County Supervisors, Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribe Environmental Department, the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance, Bishop Paiute Tribe Environmental Department, Mammoth Lakes

Fire Department, Bishop Fire Department, and at the Inyo County Unified Command meeting. Upcoming presentations include:

- Firewise and Fire Safe Councils – December 11
- Inyo County Supervisors – December 16
- Mono County Supervisors – January 6
- Bishop Paiute Tribal Council – January
- Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Tribal Council – January

Building an administrative backbone within the ESCOG is a cornerstone goal of this grant. Staff plans to hold a workshop with regional managers in early 2026 to plan for organizational needs and capacity across the partner agencies involved in this program. Topics will include identifying what administrative functions are required to support all ESCOG programs, the potential distinction between regional roles and county implementation roles, how to leverage existing funds to stabilize a core staffing model, and how future capacity grants, such as future CalFire County Coordinator funding, should be designed to build and maintain institutional capacity. Staff will return to the Board for direction on capacity needs at the February meeting.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

None.

LEGAL REVIEW:

None.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive and discuss the update on the Community Wildfire Defense Grant rollout process and staffing needs.