

NORTH YUBA LANDSCAPE RESILIENCE PROJECT

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

U.S. FOREST SERVICE - TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST
NORTH YUBA FOREST PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW

- Welcome and Introductions
- NEPA Overview
- Purpose & Need for the Project
- Development of Proposed Action
- Description of Proposed Action
- Q&A
- Closing Remarks

Meeting Logistics

- Thank you for attending and participating in this process
- The meeting is being recorded (part of documentation for NEPA process)
- For anyone who has called in, the PowerPoint Presentation (and other project information) is available at www.yubaforest.org
- Attendees will be muted until the Q&A period
- Instructions for participating in the Q&A will be provided after the presentation
- Written comments can be mailed to: Eli Ilano, Tahoe National Forest Supervisor, c/o Laurie Perrot, Attn: North Yuba Project, 631 Coyote Street, Nevada City, CA, 95959.
- Comments may also be submitted electronically at:
http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=59693

Land Acknowledgement Statement

The partnership recognizes that the North Yuba River watershed resides within the Ancestral and Traditional homelands of the Nisenan Tribe and includes shared boundaries with intertribal regions of the Mountain Maidu, Konkow and Washoe Tribes. These Tribes exist today and retain their relationships with the forest. We commit to the continued inclusion of their voices in this project.

North Yuba Forest Partnership



Thank You to Our Funders



California
**Department of
Conservation**



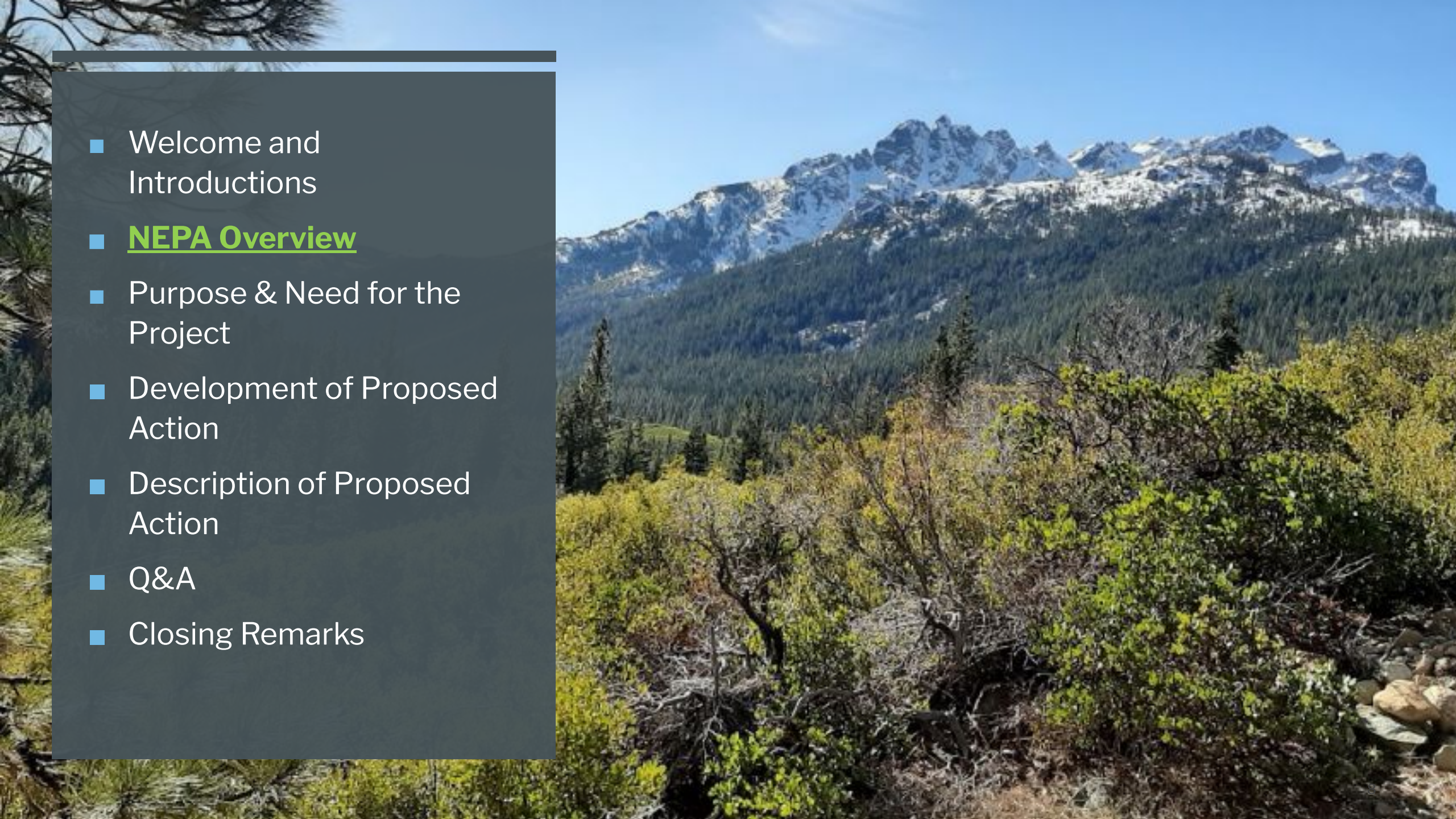
Tribal Engagement

Shelly Covert

Tribal Spokesperson

Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe



- 
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NEPA Overview – What is NEPA

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was signed into law in 1970
- Those in California may be familiar with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- CEQA and NEPA were written at the same time and are very similar
- NEPA is a federal law applying to federal activities and CEQA is specific to California
- General objectives of NEPA are:
 - To have federal agencies identify and consider the environmental effects of their actions
 - To have federal agencies identify measures to mitigate (e.g., reduce, avoid, minimize) adverse environmental effects
 - To ensure federal agencies leading the NEPA process coordinate with other federal agencies regarding the environmental resources those agencies have under their jurisdiction
 - To ensure that the public and interested parties have an opportunity to contribute to the NEPA process

U.S. Forest Service EIS NEPA Process



Intent of Scoping

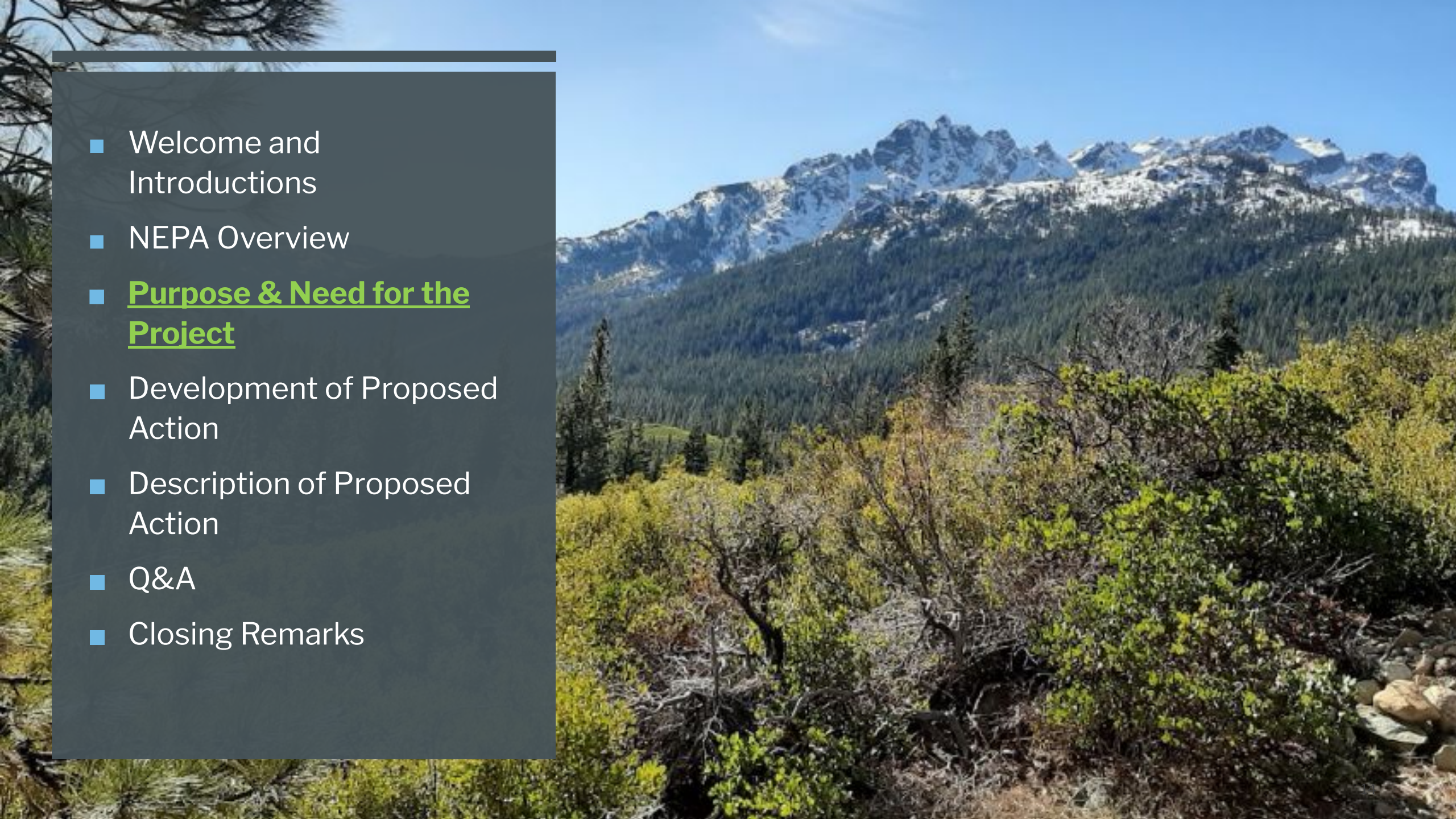
- Gather input from agencies, organizations, and the public regarding:
 - Refinement of Proposed Action
 - Development of Alternatives
 - Mechanisms to mitigate (reduce, avoid, minimize, compensate for) adverse environmental effects
 - Issue areas to be addressed in the EIS
 - Any other information those preparing the EIS should be aware of

Examples of Environmental Issue Areas that Could be Evaluated

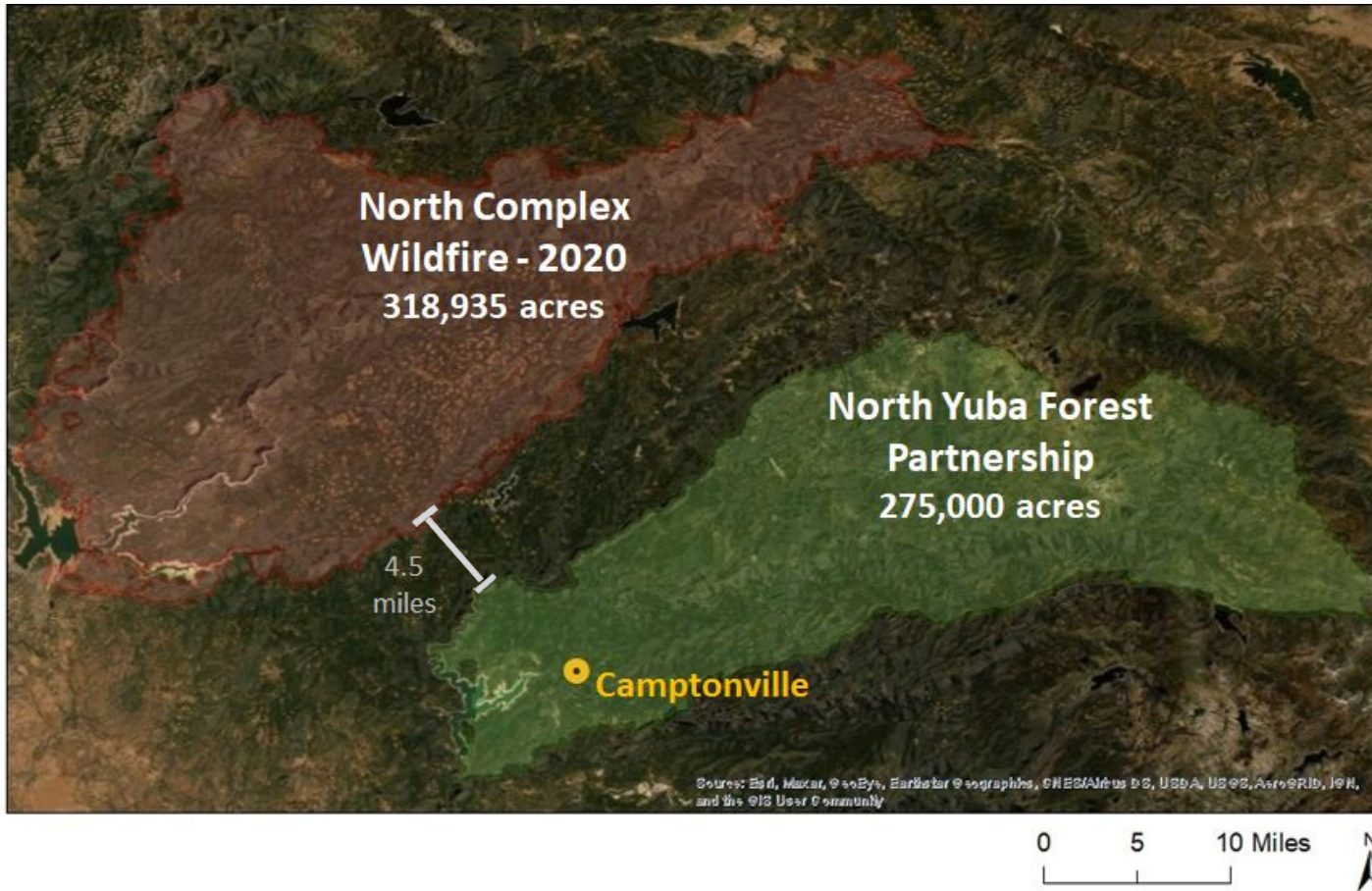
- Air Quality
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Endangered Plant & Wildlife Species
- Wetlands and Other Aquatic Habitats
- Traffic
- Recreation
- Visual Resources
- Land Use
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental Justice
- Utilities
- Noise
- Soils
- Geology and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change
- Vegetation Communities
- Public Safety
- Wildfire Risk
- Invasive Plants
- Cultural Resources
- Native American Sacred Sites
- Forestry Resources

EIS Key Content

- Purpose and Need for Action
- Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives (including the No Action Alternative)
- Affected Environment (the existing environmental conditions in the project site)
- Environmental Consequences (how each alternative will affect each component of the existing environment)
- Management Requirements and other measures to reduce adverse environmental effects

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Project Purpose and Need



Why here?
Why now?

- The landscape is at high risk of high-severity fire
- Both people and nature are at risk
- Restoring the forested landscape can increase resilience and moderate future fire behavior

Watershed Values

- The North Yuba River watershed includes valuable forest habitat,
- Is an important source of water to downstream users,
- Supports diverse habitats,
- Offers excellent opportunities for recreation, and
- Is home to multiple communities including Camptonville, Downieville, and Sierra City.



Photo Credit: Sierra Butte Trail Stewardship (upper right); Sheila Whitmore (bottom right)

Need for the Proposed Action



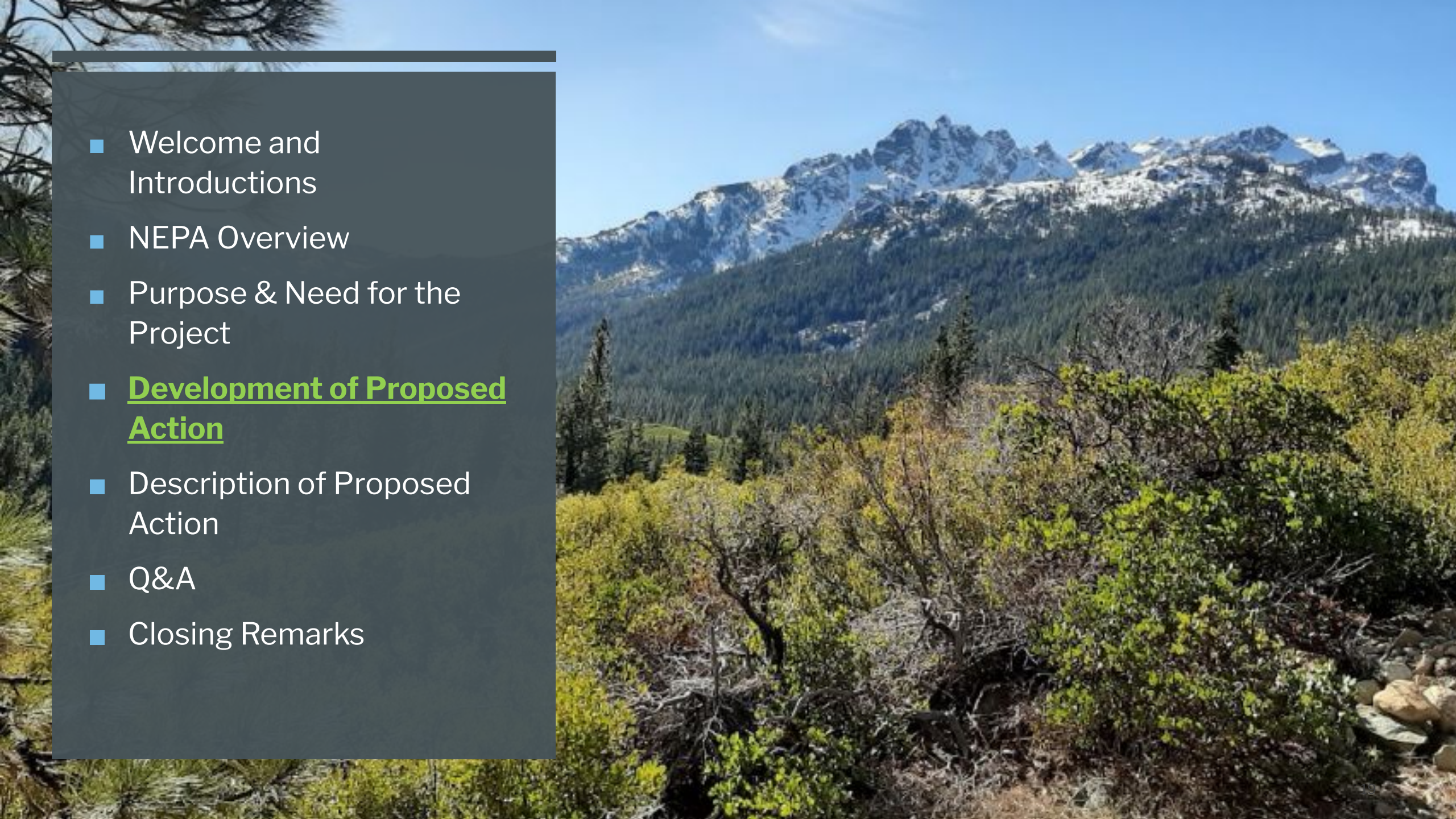
- Absence of beneficial, low-to-moderate severity fire
- Decades of fire exclusion, extensive mining, and past harvest activities have altered the structure and composition of the Landscape's forests
- Highly susceptible to drought, insect and disease infestations, and destructive wildfire.
- Very high risk of high-severity wildfire threatening our communities.

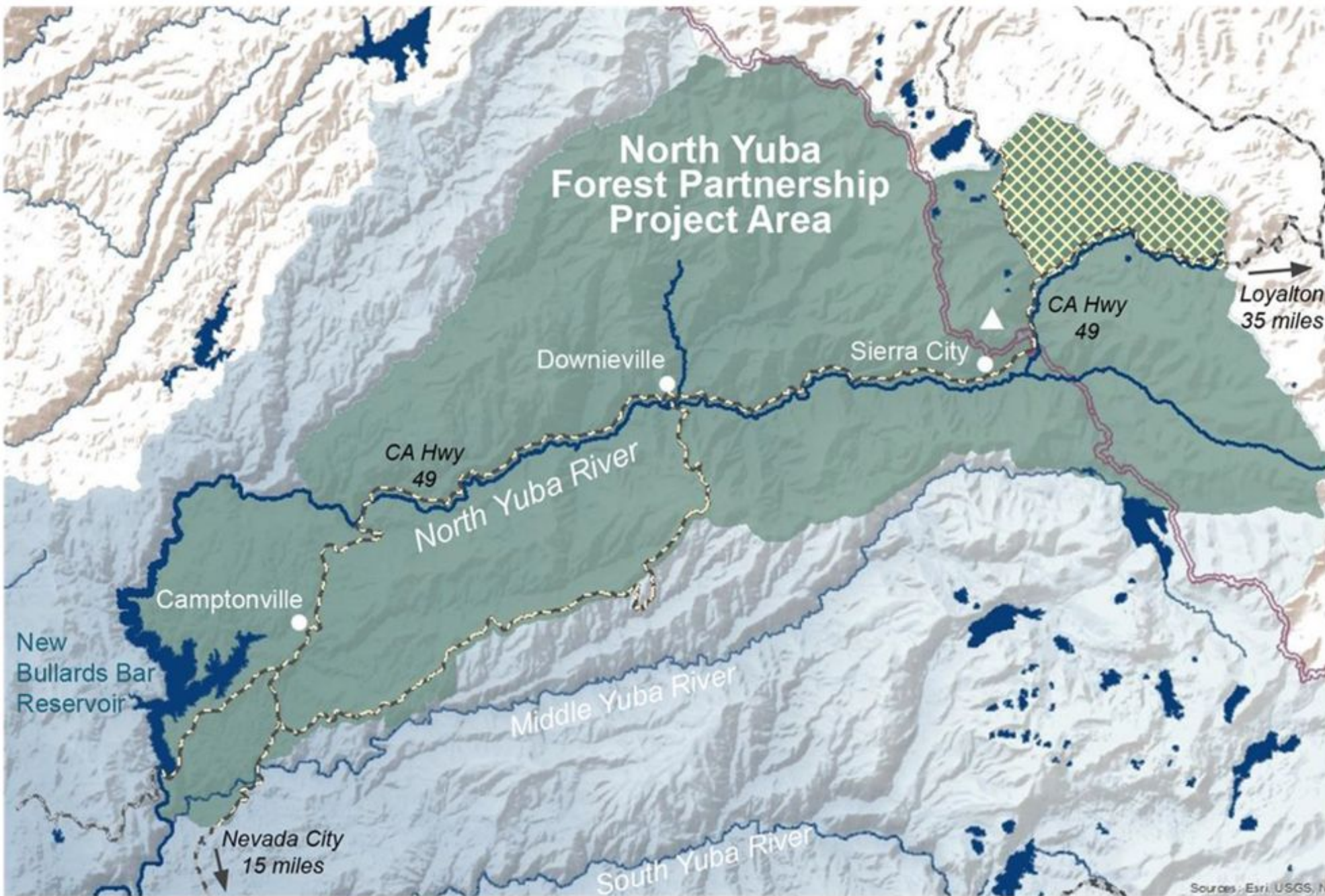
The Walker Fire (2019) from Saddleback Lookout in the North Yuba.
Photo Credit: Allison Thomson



BENEFITS OF A RESTORED & RESILIENT WATERSHED:

- Reduced wildfire risk to communities and infrastructure
- Increased water supply
- Increased biodiversity and habitat
- Decreased risk of forest diseases and pathogens
- Increased carbon storage and sequestration
- Safeguarded recreational infrastructure and tourism-based economy
- Increase in forest restoration jobs

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Partnership Goals

- Improve and restore forest health and resilience
- Reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire
- Protect and secure water supplies
- Protect communities from the risks of high-severity wildfire and climate change



Our Vision: A resilient landscape



Over time, forests will recover their more resilient characteristics, including:

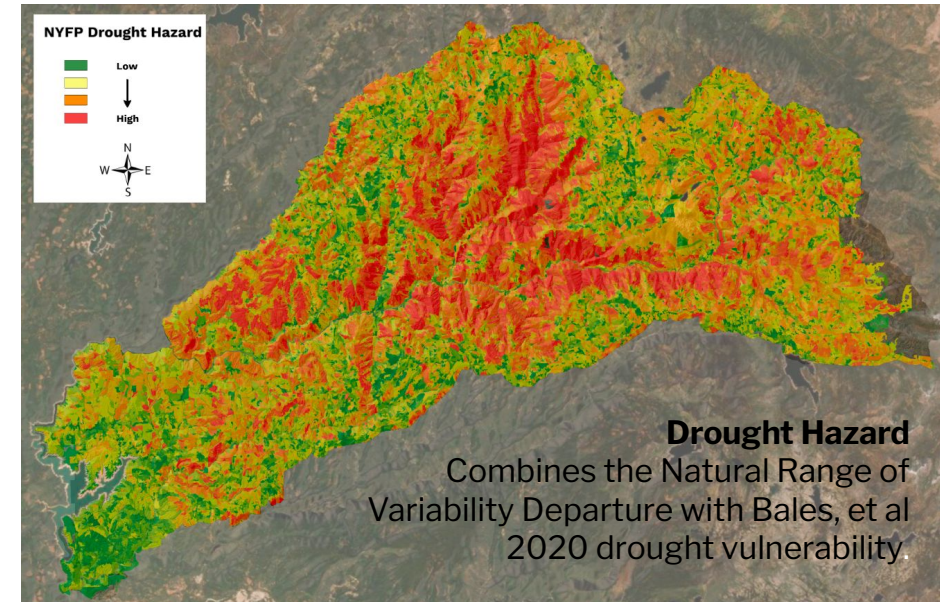
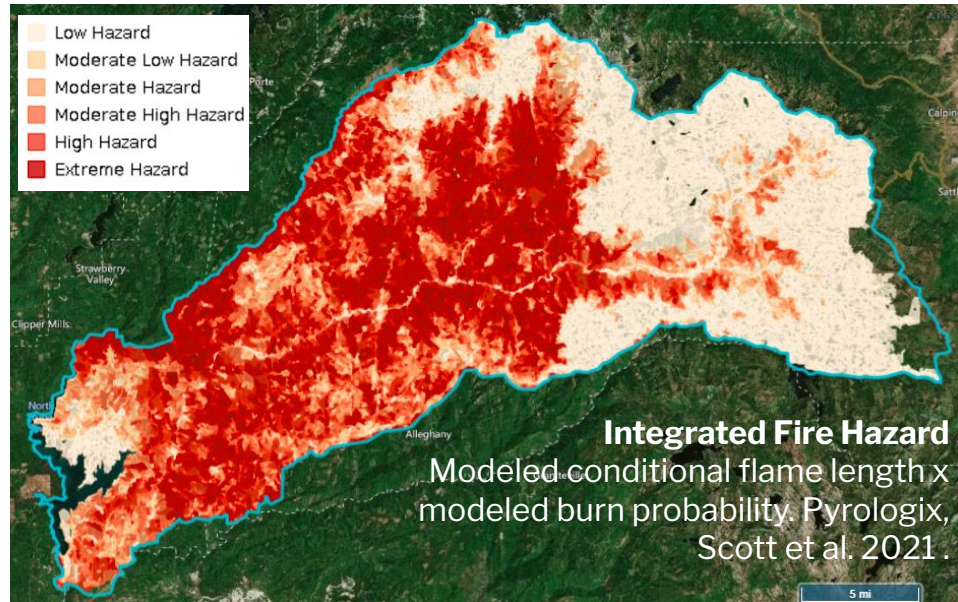
- more large, old trees
- more openings and gaps in the canopy
- increase in fire-adapted tree species while maintaining tree diversity
- fewer water stressed trees

How do we go about the planning process to achieve these ambitious goals?

- Address the problem at the landscape-scale using staged condition-based NEPA
- Collect the best available data and perform analysis that supports well-informed and transparent decision-making
- Conduct a rigorous landscape assessment to prioritize treatment locations and sequencing
- Engage scientists, forest and fire management experts, and stakeholders



Data Development



- North Yuba Historical Range of Variability Study - McGarigal et al. to frame desired conditions
- LiDAR (light and ranging) remote sensing collected in 2014, updated with EDART 2019 Landsat-derived imagery to capture vegetation structure and topography.
- Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative science foundation to inform current conditions such as drought vulnerability and carbon storage.
- Pyrologix fire modeling
- Hydrologic modeling for erosion and large woody debris potential post-fire by 2nd Nature and Vibrant Planet.

01

Inventoried the built infrastructure, natural resources, and strategic areas.



02

Developed framework for how each resource, area, asset contributes to the ten pillars of forest resilience and aligned with our MOU goals.

03

Using fire and drought modeling, estimated how each resource, asset, and strategic area would be impacted by 'no action'.

Landscape Assessment

05

Estimated the risk reduction and in some cases ecological benefit of rx fire/ thinning pre-wildfire aka 'action'.

04

Calculated the restorative value. Where restorative value = avoided loss + enhancement opportunity to determine treatment locations.



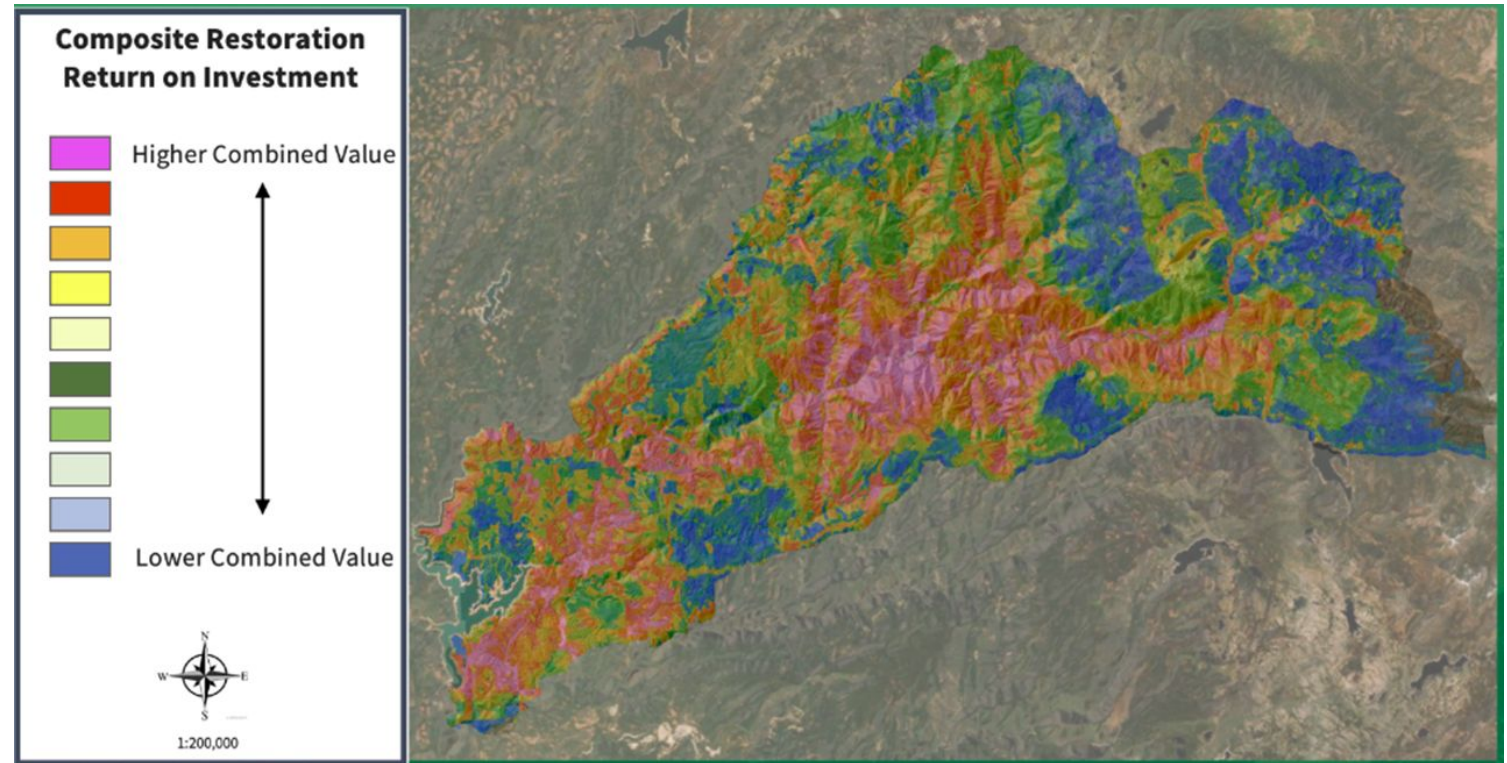
06

Performed a multi-objective tradeoff analysis to select scenarios that met operational size and budget constraints.

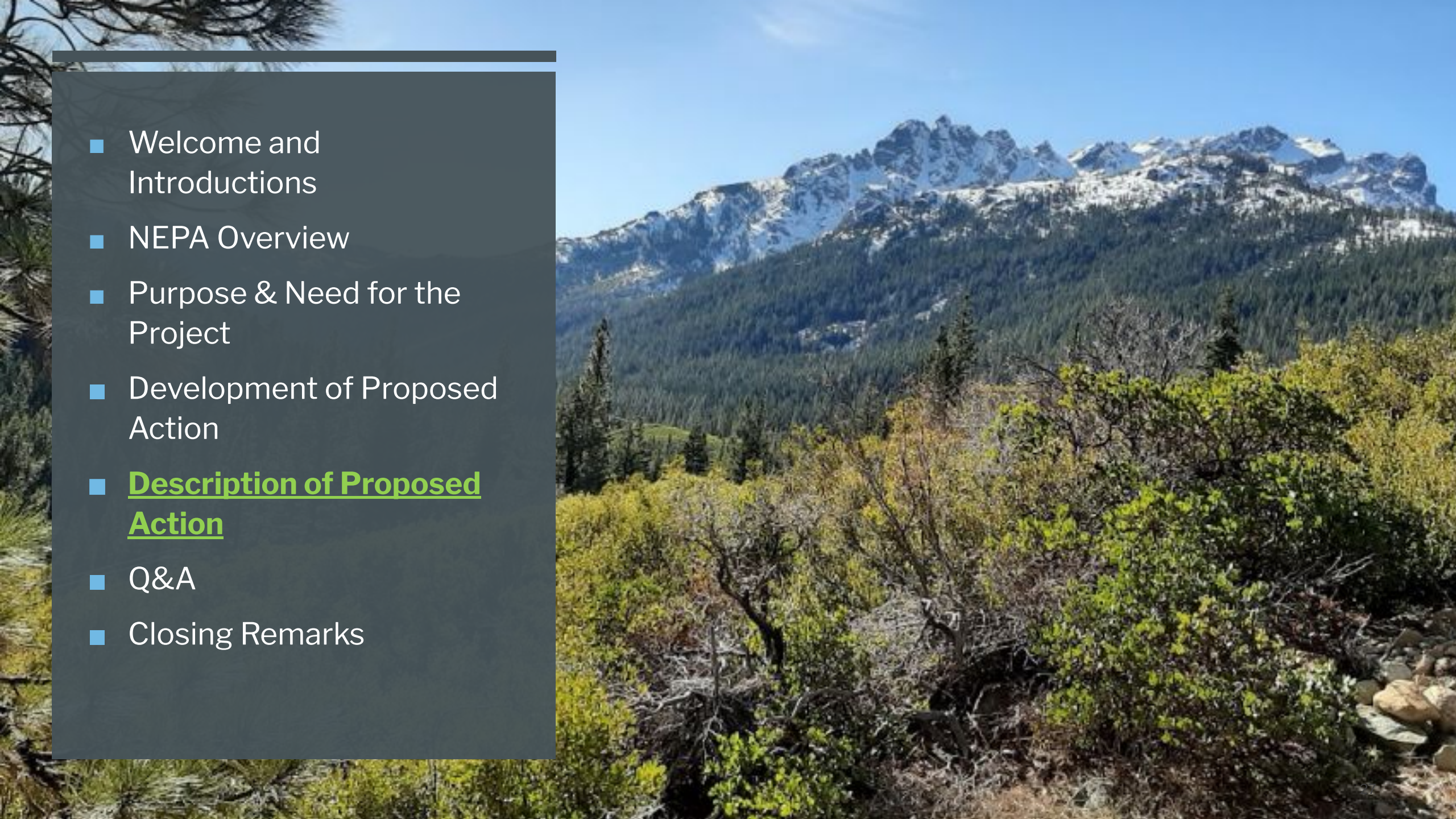
Finding Common Ground through Restorative Action

Data Incorporated in Treatment Prioritization

- **Ecological Assemblages** – large tree groves, aspen stands, meadows & fens, tall tree high canopy forest condition
- **Strategic Fuel Areas** – fuel breaks, critical access roads, community fire transmission zones
- **Power** – PG&E transmission/distribution
- **Communication** – cell towers, radio antennae, passive reflectors
- **Designated Recreation Sites** – campgrounds, trails, day use areas
- **Cultural sites** – historic and pre-historic
- **Mining** – active sites, hydraulic mines
- **Forest Investment** – plantation, carbon
- **Water** – reservoirs, probability of sediment, probability of large woody debris



- **Historic Range of Variability** – Tree cover, tree size class diversity, forest development stage
- **Structures** – primary residence, other
- **Emergency Service Infrastructure** – helibase, fire station, lookout tower
- **Wildlife Habitat:** Critical aquatic refuge, Northern goshawks, CA spotted owl, bald eagle nests, threatened and endangered frog critical habitat

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Treatments Proposed:



ECOLOGICALLY-
BASED
THINNING



PRESCRIBED
FIRE

Icon Credit: Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative.
Photo Credit: (left) National Forest Foundation.
(right) UC Berkeley Forests, Blodgett Research
Station.



Estimated Treatment Locations

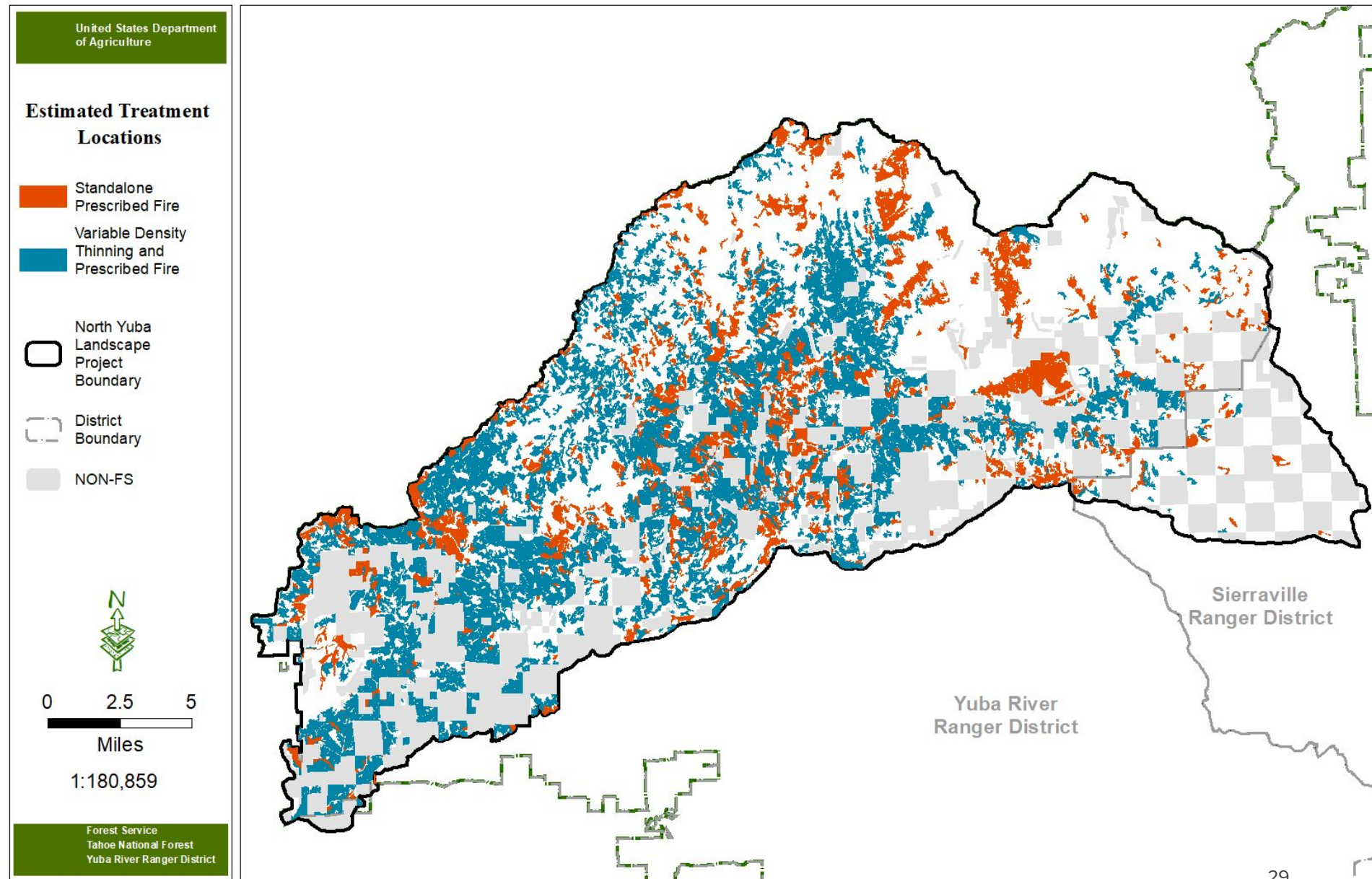


ECOLOGICALLY-BASED THINNING
≈70,000 acres



PRESCRIBED FIRE
≈26,000 acres

Icon Credit: Tahoe-Central
Sierra Initiative

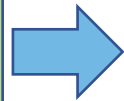


Condition-Based Assessment & Management

Data Sources

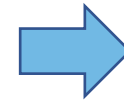
Multiple datasets used to determine desired post-treatment conditions, including:

- LiDAR, satellite, and plot-based interpretations.
- Modeled data outputs from Historical Range of Variability, Land Tender, and Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative and others



Filters


Tahoe Forest Plan Land Allocations such as CA Spotted Owl PACs or Inventoried Roadless Areas serve as a first level filter. For sensitive areas and issues, additional field data related to wildlife habitat, archeological areas and site conditions and operability constraints will be used to adjust treatments



Treatment


Project treatment type and intensity (e.g., thinning, prescribed burning)

Emphasis Areas and Treatment Strategies









United States Department of Agriculture


North Yuba Landscape Emphasis Areas


 North Yuba Landscape Project Boundary


Emphasis

-  Infrastructure
-  Unique Ecological Communities
-  Designated Recreation Sites
-  Strategic Fuel Areas
-  Forest Matrix


 Non-Productive

 District Boundary


 Non-Forest Service Land



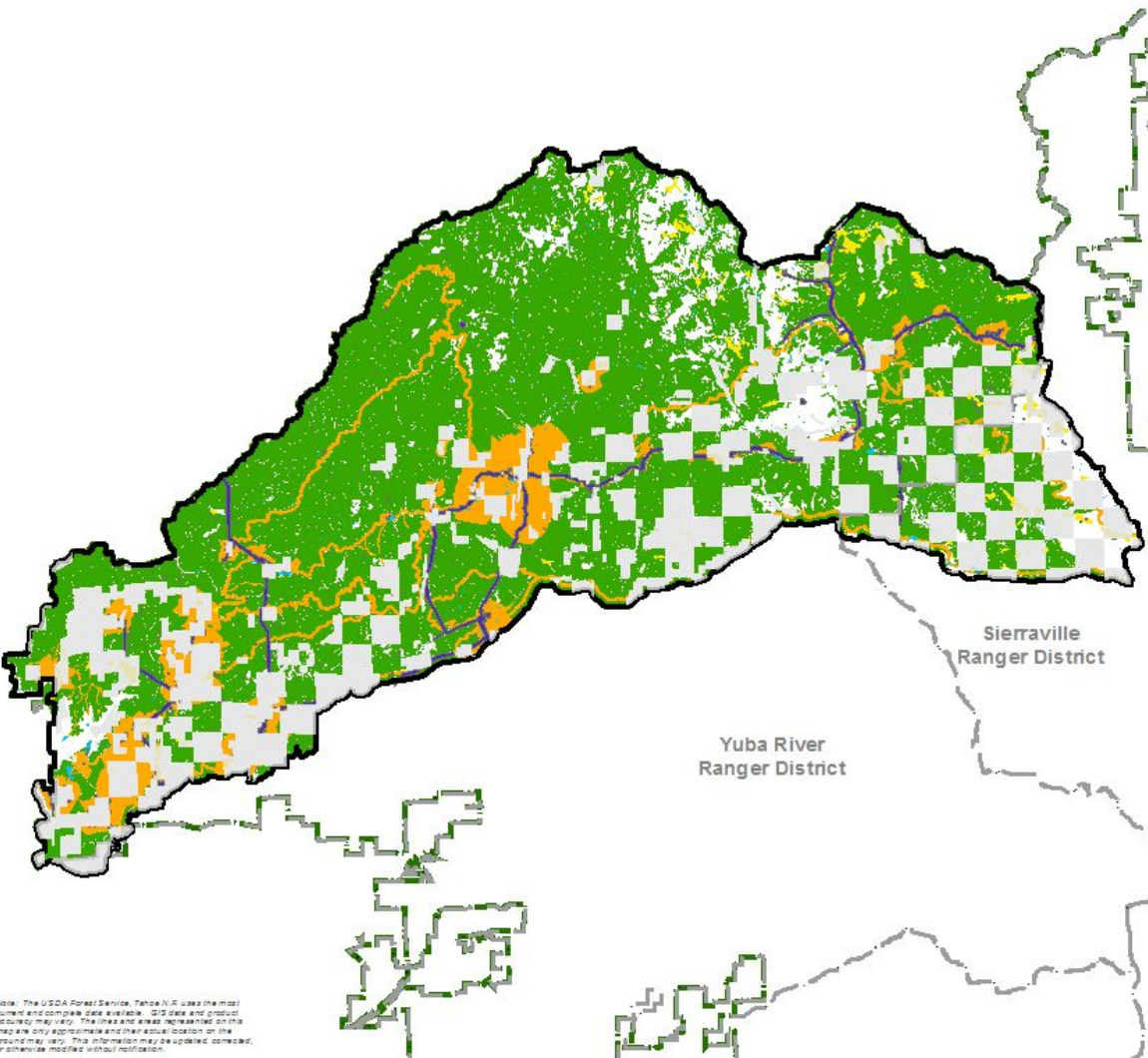
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Vicinity Map



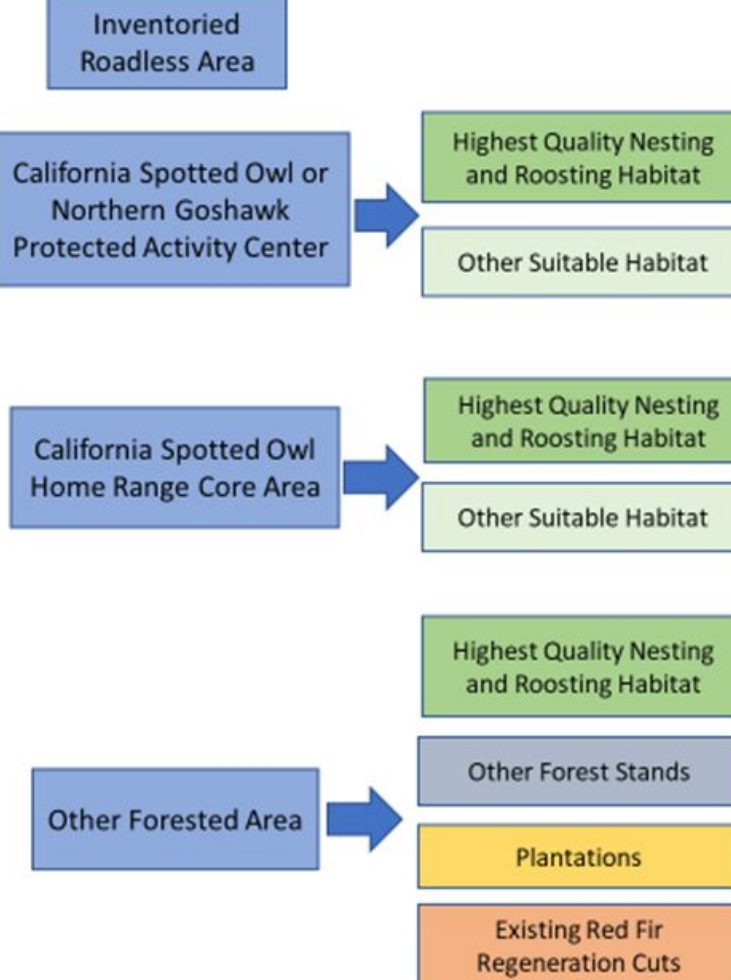
Forest Service
Tahoe National Forest
Yuba River Ranger District



The map displays the North Yuba Landscape, which is a mosaic of various land management areas. The landscape is divided into several color-coded regions: green for Forest Matrix, orange for Strategic Fuel Areas, yellow for Unique Ecological Communities, and blue for Infrastructure. A large portion of the landscape is covered by a checkerboard pattern, indicating a mix of forest and non-forest land. The map also shows the boundaries of the Yuba River Ranger District and the Sierraville Ranger District. A vicinity map in the bottom left corner shows the location of the North Yuba Landscape within the state of California.

Note: The USDA Forest Service, Tahoe N.F. uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. The lines and areas represented on this map are only approximate and their actual location on the ground may vary. This information may be updated, corrected, or otherwise modified without notification.

FOREST MATRIX: Designated Area Hierarchy and Forest Developmental Stages for Proposed Actions



```
graph TD; A[Inventoried Roadless Area] --> B[California Spotted Owl or Northern Goshawk Protected Activity Center]; B --> C[Highest Quality Nesting and Roosting Habitat]; B --> D[Other Suitable Habitat]; E[California Spotted Owl Home Range Core Area] --> F[Highest Quality Nesting and Roosting Habitat]; E --> G[Other Suitable Habitat]; H[Other Forested Area] --> I[Other Forest Stands]; H --> J[Plantations]; H --> K[Existing Red Fir Regeneration Cuts];
```

The diagram illustrates the hierarchy and developmental stages for proposed actions within the Forest Matrix. It is organized into three main categories, each with a blue box on the left and one or more green boxes on the right connected by arrows.

- Inventoried Roadless Area** (blue box) leads to **California Spotted Owl or Northern Goshawk Protected Activity Center** (blue box), which then branches into **Highest Quality Nesting and Roosting Habitat** (green box) and **Other Suitable Habitat** (green box).
- California Spotted Owl Home Range Core Area** (blue box) leads to **Highest Quality Nesting and Roosting Habitat** (green box) and **Other Suitable Habitat** (green box).
- Other Forested Area** (blue box) leads to **Other Forest Stands** (green box), **Plantations** (yellow box), and **Existing Red Fir Regeneration Cuts** (orange box).

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**Infrastructure, Strategic Fuel
Areas, and Recreation Sites:
Estimated Treatment Locations**

Infrastructure

- Hand treatment
- Mechanized treatment

Critical Access Roads

- Hand treatment
- Mechanized treatment

Fuel Break

- Hand treatment
- Mechanized treatment

WUI Defense Zone

- Hand treatment
- Mechanized treatment

Recreation Site

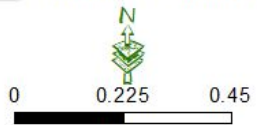
- Hand treatment
- Mechanized treatment

Existing Overlapping PAC

- Hand treatment
- Mechanized treatment

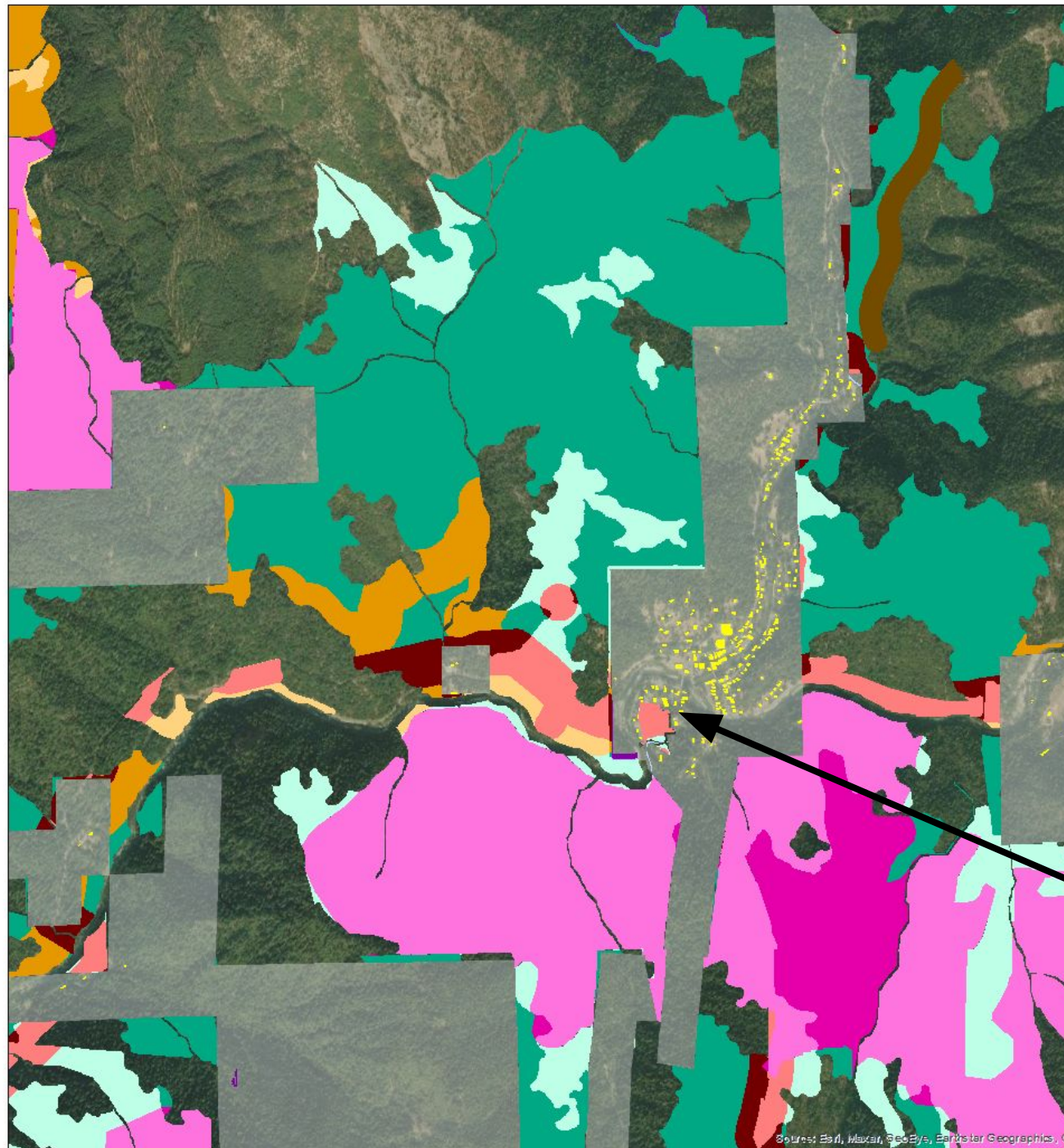
Structures

- North Yuba Landscape
Project Boundary
- District Boundary
- USDA Forest Service
- Non-Forest Service Land



Miles
1:17,140

Forest Service
Tahoe National Forest
Yuba River Ranger District



Downieville Example: Supporting Fire Adapted Communities



Sierra County
Government Office
Downieville, CA

Forest Plan Amendments

Background

- Forest Plan amendments would modify, remove, and add specific forest plan components to allow activities aligned with the Project's goals to improve overall forest resilience
- Amendments would only apply to the Project Area (not applicable to the whole forest)

Amendments Under Consideration

- Opening creation of 1-3 acres to increase landscape heterogeneity under conditions determined by Historic Range of Variability analysis.
- Removal of trees up to 39.9" under specific conditions to address species composition departure and increase resilience to drought.
- Strategic thinning in CA spotted owl and Northern goshawk protected activity centers (PACs)
- Reducing canopy cover limitations to areas outside of protected and high quality habitat.

Proposed Landscape-Scale NEPA and Staged Decision Making Approach

NEPA and Project Planning

- 210K acres of NFS lands
- Use LiDAR, HRV, TCSI and other high-resolution data and modeling to develop and analyze the proposed action and alternatives.
- Conduct surveys for areas that will be implemented first.
- Prepare EIS analyzing actions across the entire Landscape.



Initial Decision

- Record of Decision would:
- (1) authorize implementation of sub-projects where surveys have been completed, and
- adopt any project-specific forest plan amendments.



Subsequent Project Planning

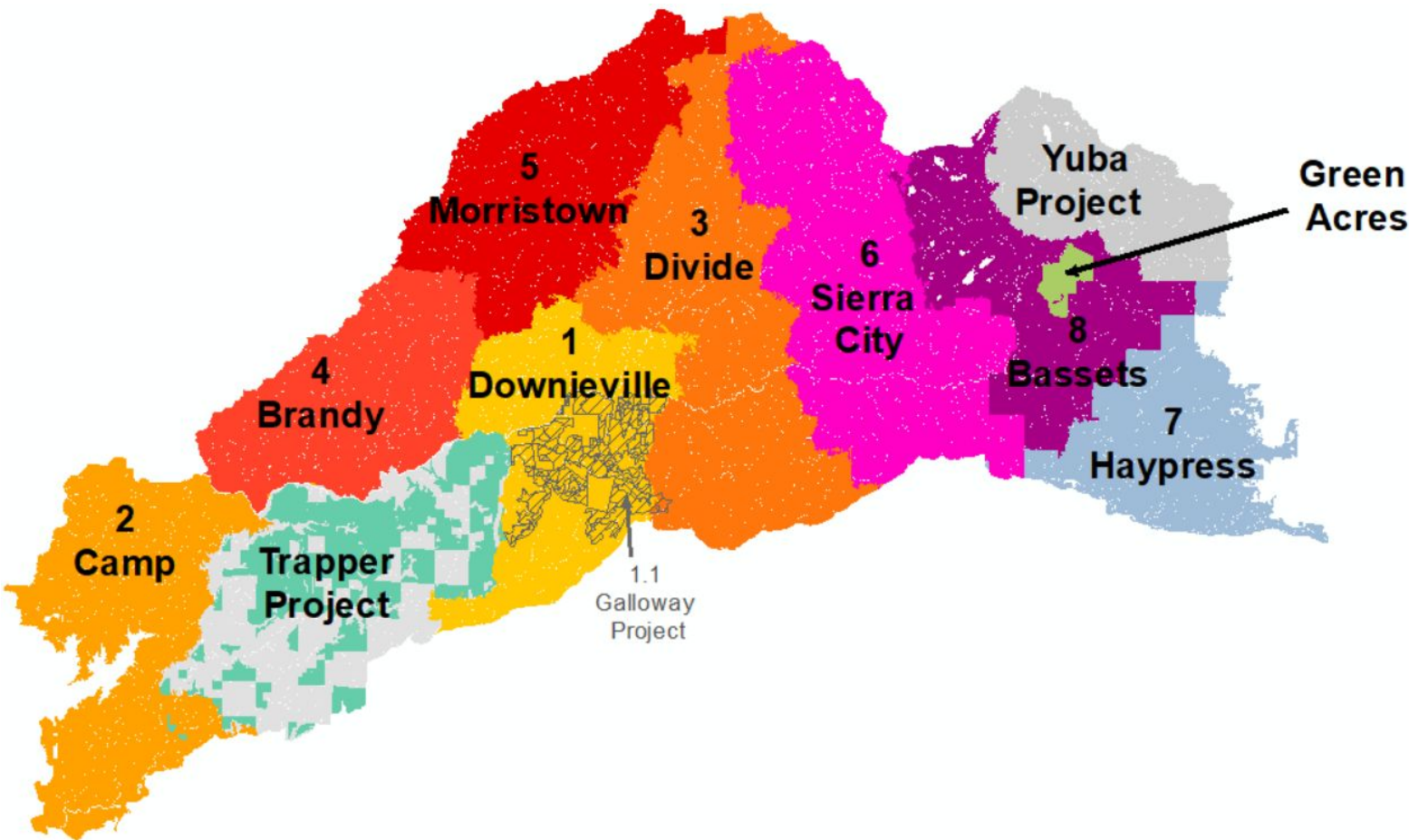
- Conduct surveys for additional sub-project areas.
- Assess new information/ changed circumstances.
- **Public engagement**
- Determine if additional NEPA analysis is required.



Subsequent Decisions

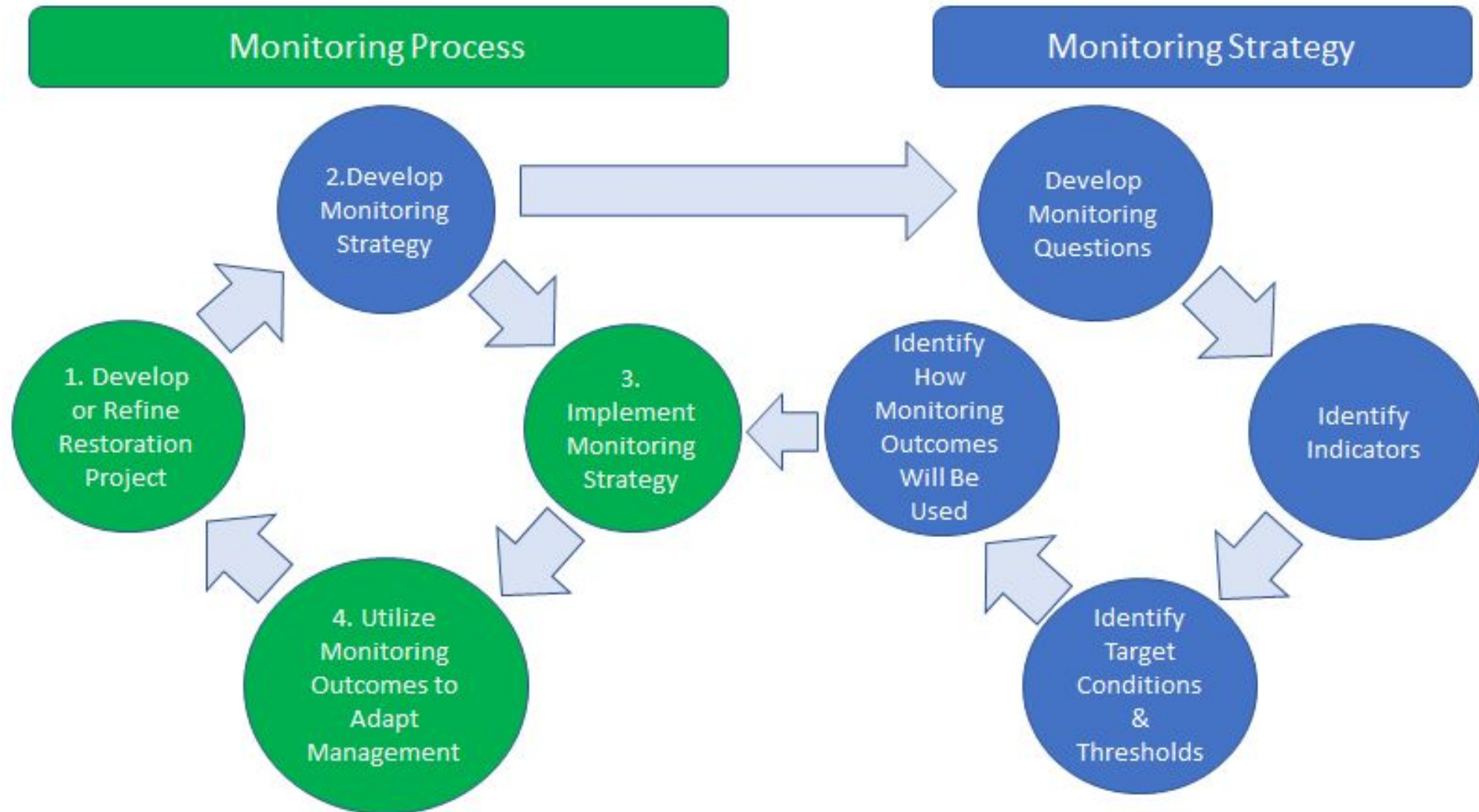
- Record of Decision would authorize implementation of additional sub-project areas where surveys have been completed.

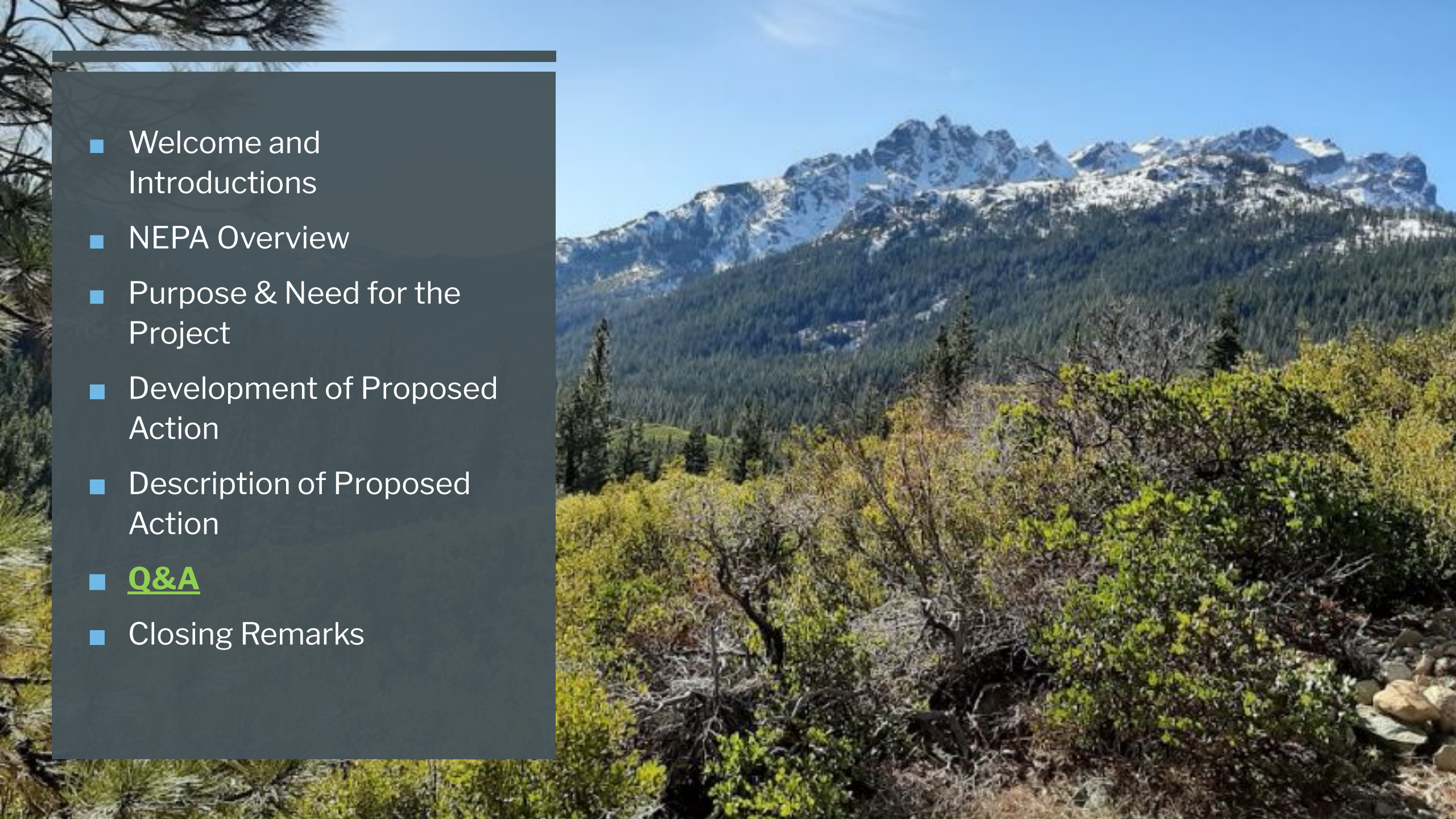
Project Sequencing with Staged Decisions



Project Area	Sequence
Downieville	1
Camp	2
Divide	3
Brandy	4
Morristown	5
Sierra City	6
Haypress	7
Bassets	8
Trapper	NEPA Complete, Implementation in progress
Yuba	NEPA Complete, Implementation in progress
Green Acres	Separate NEPA document

Monitoring and Adaptive Management for the North Yuba



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Question and Answer Segment and Scoping Comments

- This evening we will take questions related to the project and answer as best we can
- Scoping comments must be submitted in writing
 - Written comments create an official record of the comment
 - Written comments provide documentation for future eligibility to file an objection at the end of the NEPA process
- Scoping comments can address any topic, but particularly looking for input on:
 - Refinement of Proposed Action
 - Development of Alternatives
 - Mechanisms to mitigate (reduce, avoid, minimize, compensate for) adverse environmental effects
 - Issue areas to be addressed in the EIS
 - Any other information you believe those preparing the EIS should be aware of

Providing Scoping Comments

- Written comments can be mailed to:

Eli Ilano, Tahoe National Forest Supervisor, c/o Laurie Perrot, Attn: North Yuba Project, 631 Coyote Street, Nevada City, CA, 95959.

- Comments may also be submitted electronically at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=59693

- Comments must be received by Monday October 18 by 5:00 p.m.

Question and Answer Process

- Reminder that the meeting is being recorded through Zoom
- We will alternate between questions coming in through Zoom/Phone and questions from the public viewing location at the Downieville Community Hall
- For those on Zoom and calling in, please “raise your hand” if you have a question. Individuals will be identified to ask questions following the order of “raised hands”.
- Everyone will remain muted until it is their turn to ask a question.
- On the Phone
 - Press Star (*) 9 to indicate you would like to speak (this “raises your hand”)
 - Listen for the message: “The host would like you to unmute your microphone. You can press Star (*) 6 to unmute”. At this prompt please press (*) 6
 - When you are done with your question, please press Star (*) 6 to re-mute

Question and Answer Process (cont.)

- If “raising your hand” using Zoom:

The image is a screenshot of a Zoom meeting interface with a dark background. In the center, white text reads: "Select Raise Hand if you wish to be added to the queue to speak". A large red arrow points from this text down to the "Raise Hand" button in the bottom toolbar. On the right side, white text reads: "Example of host would like you to unmute". A red arrow points from this text down to a notification box. The notification box is light gray and contains a blue microphone icon, the text "The host would like you to unmute your microphone", and two buttons: "Stay muted" and "Unmute myself". The bottom toolbar includes icons for Mute, Chat, Raise Hand, Q&A, and English, along with a red "Leave" button in the bottom right corner.

**Select Raise Hand
if you wish to be
added to the
queue to speak**

**Example of host
would like you to
unmute**

The host would like you to unmute your microphone

Stay muted Unmute myself

Mute Chat Raise Hand Q&A English Leave

Question and Answer Process (cont.)

- For those in the Downieville Community Hall, please come up to the laptop at the front of the room
- The facilitatory will let you know when you walk up to the laptop and ask your questions
- We will provide a 3-minute time limit to allow everyone an opportunity to speak to the panel.

Question and Answer Session

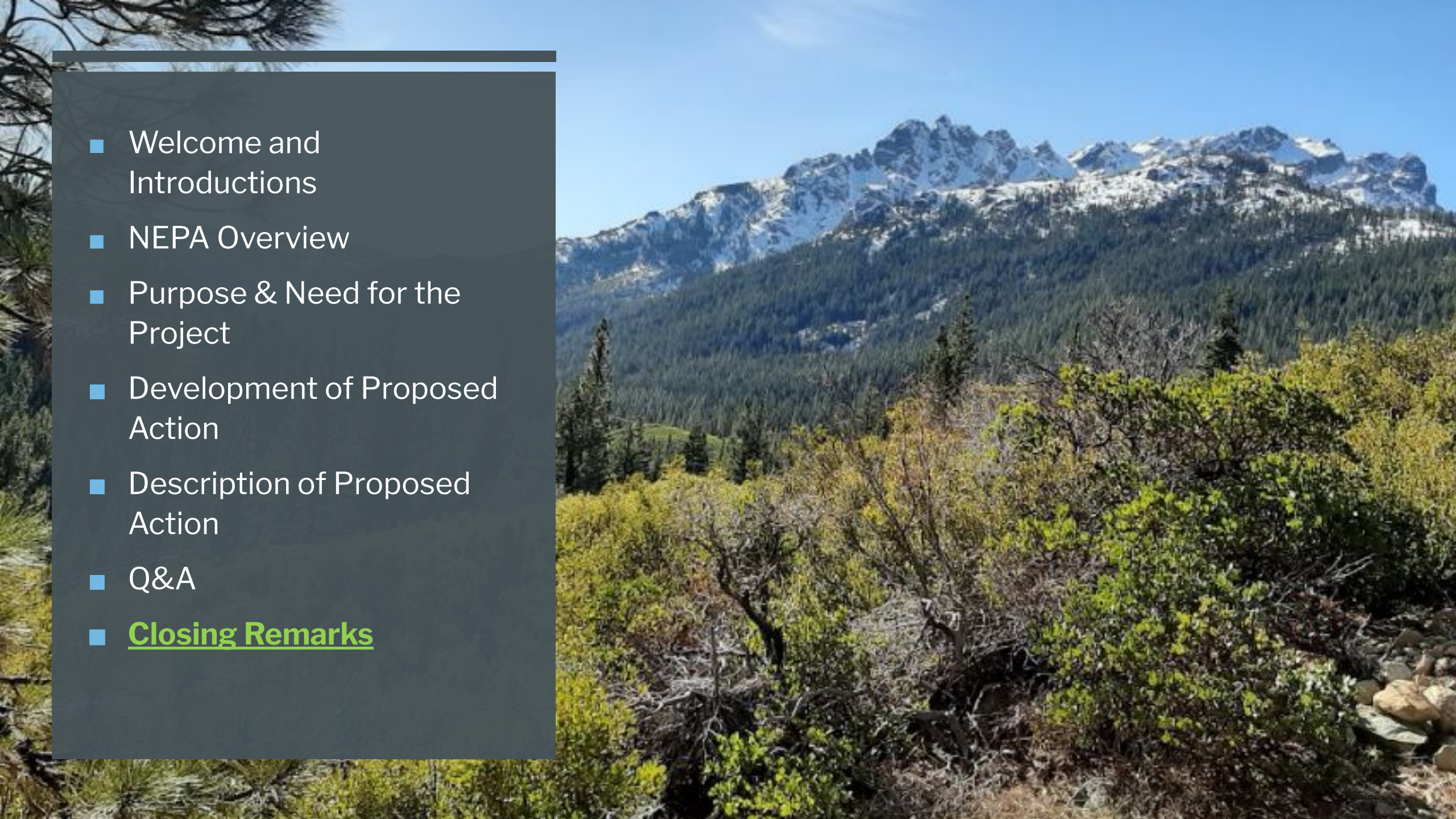
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3:00

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THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING TONIGHT

- Public and agency participation in the NEPA process makes projects and NEPA documents better
- You may always go to the <https://www.yubaforest.org> and http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=59693 sites to get further project information
- If you wish to receive project updates as they are released, go to the http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=59693 site, press the “Subscribe to Email Updates” button on the right of the screen in the “Get Connected” box and enter your e-mail address
- You can also be placed on the mailing list by sending a written request to Eli Ilano, Tahoe National Forest Supervisor, c/o Laurie Perrot, Attn: North Yuba Project, 631 Coyote Street, Nevada City, CA, 95959
- If you provide a scoping comment you will automatically be placed on the project mailing list
- The next major step in the NEPA process will be release of the Draft EIS, anticipated for Summer/Fall 2022.

