Insert date, 2016

Mr. Mark A. Rose, Director
Financial Assistance Program Division
US Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
RCPP Application
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, DC 20013-2890

Dear Mr. Rose,

The insert partner name is pleased to submit this letter of support for the Regional Conservation Partner Program (RCPP) funding the proposal entitled “The Walker Basin Drought Resiliency and Conservation RCPP” (hereinafter referred to as the “Walker Basin RCPP”). This partnership is engaged in a cooperative effort to protect agricultural production, while restoring Walker Lake and advancing watershed interests.

The Walker River Basin reaches from the Sierra Nevada headwaters to its terminus at Walker Lake. Walker Lake is a rare formation, one of just three desert terminal lakes in North America historically hosting a freshwater fishery, notably the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout, and an important Pacific Flyway stopover. Over last 134 years this unique water body has declined from about 9 million AF to less than 1 million AF, raising total dissolved solids to levels that have destabilized habitat.

The principal areas of agricultural production in the Walker River Basin, and the focus for the conservation efforts provided for in this RCPP, occur in the Smith and Mason Valleys in Lyon County, Nevada. Diverted flows from the Walker River support hay, pasture, and other irrigated crops, and have long sustained the community’s primary economy. The Walker River Paiute Tribe is within the proximity of Walker Lake. Their reservation holds substantial river access, wetlands, and lands in agricultural production.

Drought cycles have increased in both frequency and duration, persisting with little alleviation brought by successive average-to-high snowpack years. Corresponding decreases in surface water availability have severely increased groundwater abstraction in the Mason and Smith Valleys. Since the mid-1980s aquifers located in both Smith and Mason Valleys have seen significant decline, resulting in increased pumping costs, damaging storage potential, threatening land subsidence, well failure, and water quality concerns. These trends are challenging the community’s economic viability and efforts to restore the Walker River watershed.

In response to domestic well failure and significant aquifer decline, the Nevada State Engineer (NSE) issued orders curtailing the use of groundwater rights in the Smith and Mason Valleys during 2015. Although these orders were overturned in state district court, currently producers and other interested parties are working with the NSE to craft a cooperative management plan to conserve and restore the aquifer.

This RCPP will fill a critical niche in Walker Basin conservation efforts, providing willing producers and the Tribe with incentives to plan and adopt conservation practices to conserve water, protect agricultural lands, improve habitat, and assist the conveyance of water rights. It will address the national RCPP priorities of drought, water and soil quality, and habitat for fish, wildlife and invertebrates, and help producers meet new conservation mandates.

Due to the community’s economic reliance upon water resources, particularly a strained aquifer, along with congressionally-mandated efforts to improve Walker River Basin’s ecologic function, we commit $ firm, estimated commitment amount and specify as financial or administrative in-kind… if in-kind specify tasks, e.g. coordination and outreach, if financial specify project type.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fiscal Year** | **Specific Activities/Deliverable (Action)** | **Amount** | **Contribution Type** |
| **FA** | **TA** | **In-Kind** |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |

We urge you to fully support the Walker Basin RCPP.

Sincerely,

Signature

Printed Name
Title