



Staff Report

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Greg Jones, Assistant General Manager

DATE: August 25, 2021

SUBJECT: River Fire Emergency Declaration (Project #2590)

ADMINISTRATION

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution No. 2021-30 (Declaring and Acknowledging the Existence of an Emergency Due to the River Fire and Authorizing the District to Enter Into Necessary Contracts to Protect, Access, Inspect, and Repair District Property and Facilities, to Protect District Water Supplies, and to Provide for the Health and Safety of Agency Employees and the Public in General).

BACKGROUND:

Beginning August 4, the River Fire scorched over 2,600 acres, inclusive of over 4 river miles of the Bear River watershed in Placer and Nevada counties. NID owns approximately 320 acres of burned area within the watershed. The fire burned in areas where much of the terrain is steep and consists of montane hardwood and mixed conifer forests, including oak woodlands, ponderosa and grey pines, and cedar and fir trees. Slightly higher at the northern end of the fire, the lower end of the John Henry Meyer Canal flows through approximately one mile of burned slopes near Chicago Park.

Primary concerns of the fire aftermath include the burn area's hillside stability, downstream water quality issues, and the near and long-term implications to operations & maintenance of downstream facilities. In particular, trees in the river present a significant log-jam / dam safety issue, sedimentation from hillside erosion presents a substantial loss of capacity concern at Combie Reservoir, securing the Bear River Canal from landslides is a health & safety issue, and increased costs to operations & maintenance of NID's downstream infrastructure is of ongoing budgetary concern.

Downstream water infrastructure may be impacted by the burn scar, as the Bear River is both the receiving waterbody for these forested areas, and also a key component of the District's water conveyance system. Approximately 15,000 treated water customers (LOP and N. Auburn WTP's), and 3,000 raw water customers are

downstream of this wildfire-impacted area. NID further utilizes PG&E's Bear River Canal for conveyance to treated and raw water customers in Placer County.

NID is currently in the process of identifying emergency measures to reduce/stop impacts of erosion and sedimentation into the river. Staff and consultants are currently conducting a watershed assessment, where response actions will be identified and categorized for recovery efforts. These include hazard tree removal and cleanup, hillside stabilization, canal conveyance repair, etc.

NID's initial post-fire response and recovery efforts are drafted below:

- I. **Watershed Assessment:** NID staff is in the process of accessing and collecting onsite information to assess, document, and define the scope and severity of the wildfire burn area. This includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Development of burn scar maps showing land ownership (private, county, state, federal, NID). Indicate areas where the slope is greater than 30% and highlight these as high erosion areas.
 - b. Fly drone / LIDAR over NID lands to collect aerial and topographic data
 - c. Onsite assessment of burned parcels and water system infrastructure
 - d. Quantify, describe and document the extent of damage

- II. **Define Phase 1 Response Action:**
 - a. Identify cleanup associated with canal and water system infrastructure and determine capacity to address hazard tree removal and cleanup, berm repair, water connection repair, etc.
 - b. Using a water resource protection framework, define priority areas (100-200 ft. buffers around river, tributaries, all infrastructure, and utilities) to complete phase 1 cleanup of burned materials and reduce surface erosion, etc.
 - c. Work with regional partners to address potential for hazard trees and downstream impacts to Combie Reservoir (sediment and large woody debris/logs) and to NID's dam and hydro facilities
 - d. Explore options for salvage harvest under a CAL FIRE Emergency Exemption, also explore CFIP funding potential for post-fire slash treatment and cleanup with handcrews/mastication, etc.

- III. **Define Phase 2 Response Actions:**
 - a. Identify medium to long-term site cleanup activities, including requirements for operating within an old Hansen mine area.
 - b. Work with CABY RWMG to add this work to the CABY list and to research funding opportunities for a multi-jurisdictional collaboration with Placer Co., PCWA, PG&E, etc.
 - c. Contact CDFW to discuss impacts and explore CAL FIRE funding opportunities

NID is partnering with regional partners at PCWA and PG&E to ensure the local, state, and federal jurisdictions understand the problem. NID has participated in on-site and virtual meetings with Placer & Nevada County OES staff, County Environmental Health Officers, Cal OES, and FEMA staff to address concerns. A multi-jurisdictional effort of cooperation, resource sharing, and support will be needed to adequately address the ongoing concerns to the operations reliant on this important area.

Outside the River Fire burn area, NID staff continue to complete projects which increase forest resiliency and reduce wildfire vulnerability in the region. NID will complete a 300-acre fire fuels treatment project at Scotts Flat Reservoir by the end of 2021 and has a 125-acre fire fuel break proposal pending with CAL FIRE for grant funding to expand an existing fire fuel break near the community of Black Horse/Lake of the Pines.

BUDGETARY IMPACT:

At this time, it is too early to provide reliable cost and time estimates for restoring the burn area on NID properties. Early estimates are at approx. \$3.5M. Staff will come back to the Board in the future with any required budget amendments.

ATTACHMENTS: (2)

- Draft Resolution No. 2021-30
- Map



RESOLUTION NO. 2021-30

OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT

DECLARING AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE EXISTENCE OF AN EMERGENCY DUE TO THE RIVER FIRE AND AUTHORIZING THE DISTRICT TO ENTER INTO NECESSARY CONTRACTS TO PROTECT, ACCESS, INSPECT, AND REPAIR DISTRICT PROPERTY AND FACILITIES, TO PROTECT DISTRICT WATER SUPPLIES, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF AGENCY EMPLOYEES AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL

WHEREAS, On August 4, 2021, the River Fire started near Colfax, California, and rapidly increased in size to threaten Nevada Irrigation District water supplies, facilities, property, and the public in general; and

WHEREAS, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution 21-365 ratifying a local health emergency proclamation due to the immediate public health threat caused by hazardous waste and debris from the River Fire; and

WHEREAS, the Placer County adopted a proclamation adopting an emergency due to the River Fire; and

WHEREAS, NID owns approximately 320 acres of forested lands within the River Fire burn area; and

WHEREAS, approximately 15,000 treated water customers and 3,000 raw water customers receive supply water from the conveyances of the Bear River and the Bear River Canal and are downstream of the River Fire burn area; and

WHEREAS, emergency and ongoing remediation of the burn area lands in the Bear River watershed will assist in short and long-term benefits to water quality, protection of the environment and the District's downstream facilities; and

WHEREAS, it is of benefit to the District to take actions required to protect the water supply prior to the onset of any precipitation events; and

WHEREAS, due to local emergency conditions and the need for immediate action, it has been determined that it may be necessary to take expedited action not consistent with the authority levels identified in the District's Procurement Policy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the recitals stated above are true and correct and are incorporated herein as findings of the Board of Directors:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a local emergency now exists throughout Nevada Irrigation District, and such period of local emergency shall continue for so long as conditions so warrant that designation, in the discretion of the Board of Directors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as a result of the condition of local emergency, the General Manager is authorized and directed to:

- a. Negotiate and enter into contracts outside of the competitive bidding requirements of the-Public Contract Code otherwise applicable to District actions and the District's Procurement Policy, in delegated purchasing authority temporarily for the duration of this local emergency increased to \$500,000, in order to avoid danger to life and property, to protect the environment and District facilities and ongoing operations and to protect the health and safety of the public, including District employees; and
- b. Take such further reasonable and necessary actions to respond to conditions of local emergency and to avoid and/or mitigate interruption of essential public water services, hydroelectric generation, and impacts to the environment; and
- c. Provide regular updates to the Board of Directors on actions taken by the General Manager under authorities delegated by this Resolution; if appropriate, based on the action taken, the General Manager will seek ratification by the Board of Directors of such actions taken.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board shall regularly and continually review whether or not the local emergency conditions as set forth in this Resolution continue to exist until the Board determines that the subject emergency no longer exists.

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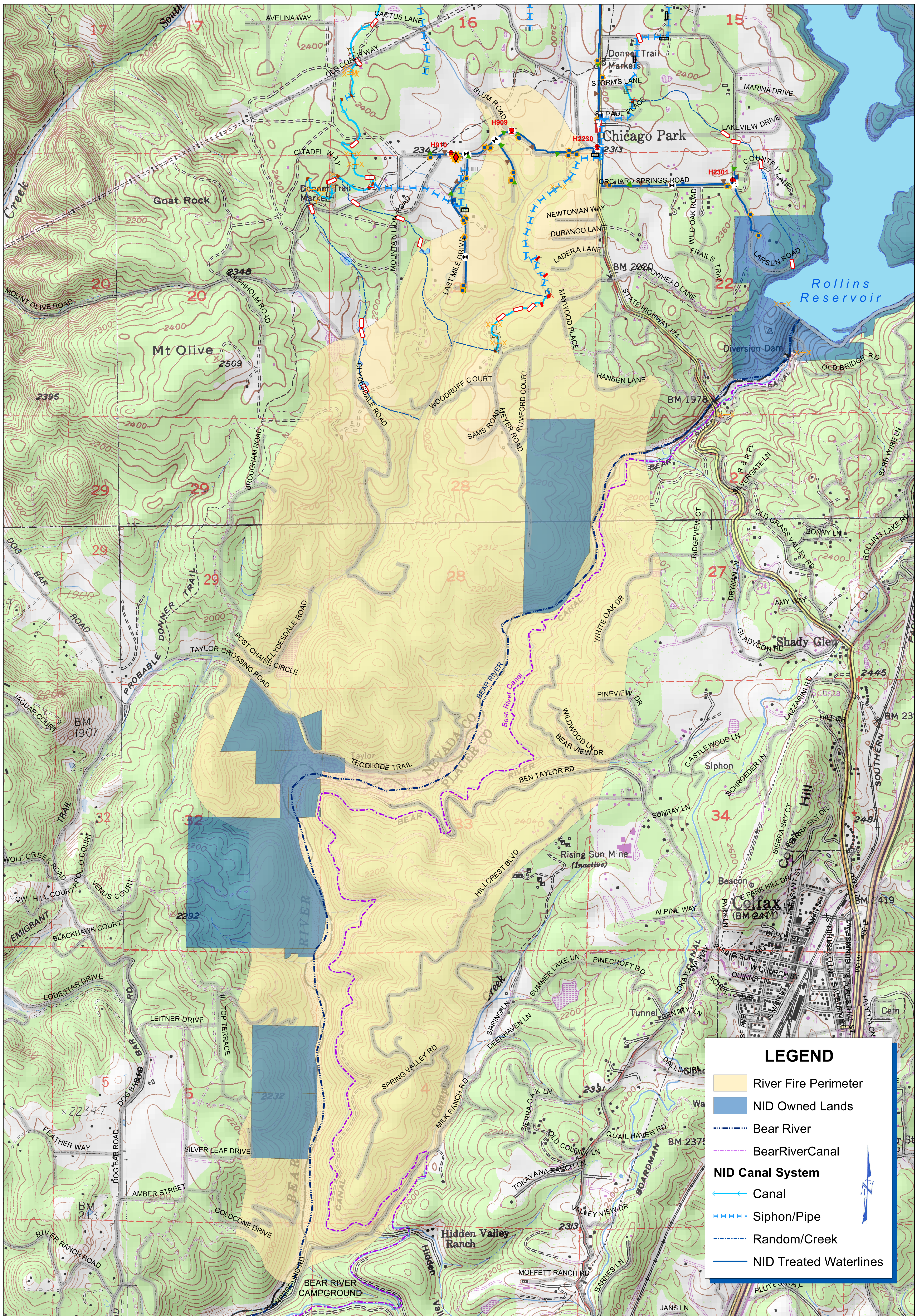
PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Nevada Irrigation District at a regular meeting held on the 25th day of August 2021 by the following vote:

AYES:	Directors:
NOES:	Directors:
ABSENT:	Directors:
ABSTAINS:	Directors:

President of the Board of Directors

Attest:

Secretary to the Board of Directors



LEGEND

- River Fire Perimeter
- NID Owned Lands
- Bear River
- BearRiverCanal
- NID Canal System**
- Canal
- Siphon/Pipe
- Random/Creek
- NID Treated Waterlines

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