

December 3-4 2014
Grass Valley Elks Lodge
109 South School Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945



December 3, 2014

Board Tour

1:00 – 4:30 PM

Members of the Board and staff will participate in a field trip to explore issues and activities related to Forest Health in the Central Subregion. Members of the public are invited to participate in the field tour but are responsible for their own transportation and lunch. The tour will start in the parking lot of The Holbrooke Hotel, 212 W. Main Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945.

Reception

5:00 – 7:00 PM

Following the Board tour, Boardmembers and staff will attend a reception open to the public. The reception will be held at the Art Works Gallery, 113 Mill Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945.

December 4, 2014

8:45 AM – 1:00 PM

Board Meeting

(End time of the meeting is approximate)

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Closed Session (This Portion Of The Meeting Is Not Open To The Public)

Evaluation of the performance of the Executive Officer by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board. (Government Code, Section 11126, subd. (a)(1).)

RESUME OPEN SESSION APPROXIMATELY 9:15AM

IV. Approval of September 4, 2014 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

V. Public Comments

Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on items not on the agenda.

VI. Board Chair's Report

The Chair of the Board will provide an update on matters of interest to the Governing Board.

VII. Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2015 (ACTION)

The Board will elect a member to serve as Vice Chair for calendar year 2015.

VIII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

- a. Administrative Update
- b. Policy and Outreach Update
- c. Great Sierra River Cleanup Update

- d. Miscellaneous Updates
- e. Discussion Relating to Forest Health Issues

IX. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

X. 2015 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

The Board will review and approve a schedule for Board meetings for calendar year 2015.

XI. Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan (ACTION)

The Board may take action on the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Action Plan.

XII. 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Awards (ACTION)

The Board may take action on recommended grants to be awarded under the 2013-14 Grant Program. Staff will present the following projects and their related California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents to the Board for Action:

- [Project #809](#) – Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- [Project #811](#) – Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project with Mitigated Negative Declaration
- [Project #812](#) – Mono County Thermal Biomass Project with Notice of Exemption from CEQA

XIII. Discussion of Proposition 1 Allocations for the SNC (INFORMATIONAL)

Staff will discuss the upcoming allocation of funds under Proposition 1 (Water Bond. Funding for Water Quality, Supply, Treatment, and Storage Projects), including potential focus on grant funding and the process for developing guidelines.

XIV. Revisions to the 2014-15 Action Plan (ACTION)

Staff will present the Board with a revised 2014-15 Action Plan and the Board may take action on it.

XV. Potential Legislative Proposal (ACTION)

Staff will present a potential legislative proposal to be pursued by SNC.

XVI. Boardmembers' Comments

Meeting Materials are available on the SNC Web site at www.sierranevada.ca.gov. For additional information or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 823-4700, toll free at (877) 257-1212; or via email at Tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov, or in person or by mail at: 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn CA 95603. If you need reasonable accommodations please contact Ms. Armstrong at least five (5) working days in advance, including documents in alternative formats.

Closed Session: Following, or at any time during the meeting, the Board may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation; property negotiations; or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126, subdivision (e)(2)(B)(i).

Provide an opportunity for members of the Board to make comments on items not on the agenda.

XVII. Public Comments

Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on items not on the agenda.

XVIII. Adjournment

Meeting Materials are available on the SNC Web site at www.sierranevada.ca.gov. For additional information or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 823-4700, toll free at (877) 257-1212; or via email at Tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov, or in person or by mail at: 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn CA 95603. If you need reasonable accommodations please contact Ms. Armstrong at least five (5) working days in advance, including documents in alternative formats.

Closed Session: Following, or at any time during the meeting, the Board may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation; property negotiations; or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126, subdivision (e)(2)(B)(i).

September 3-4, 2014
Bridgeport Memorial Hall
73 N. School Street
Bridgeport, CA 93517



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:01am. Kirwan welcomed everyone and shared her thanks to everyone who participated in the tour and to staff and partners who helped put it together. Boardmember John Brissenden commented on how nice it is to see the landscape on the east side. He indicated that the 1,240-acre Conservation Easement viewed on the field tour was tremendous.

Supervisor Paul Roen, Sierra County Supervisor, (alternate for Supervisor Sherrie Thrall) was issued the Oath of Office by Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul.

II. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, John Laird, Bob Kirkwood, Bob Johnston, John Brissenden, Pam Giacomini, Paul Roen, Byng Hunt, Louis Boitano, Allen Ishida, Bernie Gyant, and Este Stifel.

Absent: Ron Briggs and Woody Smeck

III. Approval of June 12, 2014 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Boitano seconded the motion to approve the June 12, 2014 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comments

Sarah Green, Alpine Watershed Group thanked the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and staff for all the support to Alpine County and the Watershed Group. She specifically wanted to announce the First Annual Alpine Aspen Festival, combining visitor opportunities such as hiking, fishing, photography, with restoration and educational work and monitoring. The event is September 25-28. She also thanked the Board for consideration of the Alpine County Fuels Reduction Project.

V. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Kirwan welcomed California Natural Resources Agency Secretary John Laird. Secretary Laird expressed his pleasure to be at his first SNC Board meeting and he expressed his surprise that it took so long to get here. He stated that the SNC is reaching its tenth anniversary and is everything he had dreamed of when he co-authored the legislation that created it. While there was initial polarization regarding the creation of the SNC, Laird believes that it now has broad support within the Sierra as a result of the value of the work it has done and the way it has carried out its mission. Laird said that there are many issues that need attention, such as drought and wildfire risk. A specific focus for him during the Governor's

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second term will be to address the need for sustainable funding for stewardship of public lands.

Kirwan thanked Secretary Laird and said, "with SNC as his 'child', we look up to him and appreciate his comments."

Kirwan shared information about a meeting that took place on August 3-4, at Sorensen's Resort. She said the purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the first ten years of the SNC's existence and begin to consider what to do in the next ten years. Other participants included Boardmember Brissenden, Executive Officer, Jim Branham, Assistant Executive Officer, Joan Keegan, and Regional Policy and Programs, Angela Avery. Staff from Sierra Business Council, Sierra Nevada Alliance, and The Sierra Fund also participated. Kirwan shared some thoughts on where the SNC has been most successful over the last ten years and some of the challenges faced. She said that key questions for the future include what the SNC will do with less bond money, how they maintain their relevance and ensure issues in the Sierra are adequately addressed, how they connect with other agencies and programs to leverage resources, and what can they do to get more recognition from the administration and the legislature? She summarized the meeting as teeing up big picture issues for future, more detailed conversations with the Board and Stakeholders.

VI. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer, Jim Branham, stated that the discussion referred to by the Chair had reaffirmed that the SNC's enabling legislation really got it right for the Region. He said the mission and Board make-up in particular have contributed to the SNCs success in the Region. While he noted that there are things we can do better, it was the right approach. He also indicated that initial worries about polarization and conflict have faded and it is hard to identify the local representatives from the statewide representatives on the Board in terms of issues.

Branham also noted that the Strategic Plan is to be updated next year and much of what was discussed will be incorporated into that process.

a. Administrative Update

Amy Lussier, SNC's Administrative Services Division Chief, stated that the SNC successfully spent 99% of the budget last year and that our current year budget is in good shape and on track. She also called the Board's attention to Attachment A of the staff report, an organizational chart that includes pictures of all of the SNC staff. She said it will be kept updated and will be included in the Board packet for every meeting.

Lussier noted that a retired annuitant has been hired to do work resulting from the SNC's Memorandum of Understanding with the Stewardship Council now

that we have executed our first covenant. She said all of his work will be reimbursed by the Council.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Branham shared a few comments about discussions staff have had relative to the future water bond. A packet was included in the Board materials with information on the outcomes of those discussions. He noted that at various times in the discussion, the SNC was identified to receive amounts ranging between \$115 million down to zero. Staff continued to work with partners and supporters to address the various bond proposals, from Senator Wolk to Assemblymember Rendon and others. In the end, the amount the SNC received in the water bond was \$25 million. There is obviously a level of disappointment with the final outcome, but the SNC is committed to leveraging the \$25 million and working with other agencies to achieve the greatest benefit (if the measure passes). Staff will provide the Board a more detailed discussion in December. It is unclear at this time as to when funds will be available.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked if the bond has considerable funds that are relevant to the Sierra but don't come directly to the SNC, but instead go to Department of Water Resources (DWR), Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and CAL FIRE. She also asked what the prospects are for any kind of collaboration to ensure those funds will be used for multipurpose projects. What signals have we had from other agencies?

Branham responded that there are funds in the water bond for those agencies and others. He stated that the SNC is being careful about getting too far ahead of ourselves with the General Election still being a couple months away, but he assured the Board that staff will engage with those others agencies and potential grantees.

Secretary Laird concurred with Branham's comments. One of the challenges is that both Cap and Trade and water bond are moving away from traditional earmarks, and towards setting goals. The bigger challenge for the SNC and others is to figure out where there might be eligibility and link it to pots of specific funds. The Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP), for example, has opportunities for a variety of projects. There might be a role for the SNC to help develop capacity to assist potential partners/applicants apply for other pots of money.

Boardmember Giacomini responded to Secretary Laird, saying the SNC is already set-up to manage funds, while DFW is having to create an entirely new system.

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Secretary Laird responded that DFW has done massive amounts of restoration in recent years. Laird also noted he is working with CAL FIRE on being open to partnerships and interagency cooperation.

Branham stated one of the things he concluded as the process played out, SNC doesn't have a champion in the Legislature. He expressed disappointment that the Region's legislative representatives would be helpful, but in the end, it didn't materialize. He noted that finding a champion from outside the Region is of great importance, and we will continue to struggle without one.

Branham acknowledged the support on the Water Bond from The Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association, and in particular, the Sierra Business Council (SBC). In terms of Cap and Trade, the SNC went through another exercise to secure funding for 2015-16, but have been informed by the Natural Resources Agency that there will be no changes from the current year funding.

Secretary Laird added that he personally advocated successfully for some funding from Cap and Trade Auction revenue go for agricultural lands preservation. Given the lack of funding for the Williamson Act, this provides another opportunity for agricultural land conservation.

Angela Avery, SNC's Regional Policy and Programs Manager, gave an update on the SNC's recent outreach and communications activities. She indicated that the SNC has focused a great deal of its communication on issues related to water and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction. The current focus is on development of an outreach plan for the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan.

Avery noted that this month marks the tenth anniversary of the SNC's creation. Last week, in an attempt to publicize this, local representative Boardmembers were asked to issue op-eds for their local media. Boardmember Hunt has already published an op-ed in the Sierra Wave. The SNC kicked off a social media campaign using Facebook and Twitter to help publicize successes over our first ten years. Avery also reported that the Great Sierra River Cleanup (GSRC) hit a milestone of securing 16 legislative co-chairs. Staff is using the Sierra Wildfire Wire Blog to communicate information related to fires and the issues associated with them.

Boardmember Ishida asked if staff have contacted Public Broadcasting Service, as this is a prime opportunity to get television exposure of what's happened in the last ten years. Public radio is also a good outlet for communicating these stories. He stated that the SNC needs to come up with a way to educate the metropolitan areas of our work and the benefits they derive from the Region.

Rural counties did not fare well on the Bond, and we need to work on the outreach necessary to correct that.

Boardmember Kirkwood shared that he did hear a National Public Radio (NPR) piece on salvage logging on the Rim Fire, which at least addressed some of the issues.

Avery also shared that the SNC organized a media tour of the Rim Fire in August and Capitol Public Radio was there and are planning to do a news series on wildfire, which will hopefully bring the situation to light.

c. Rim Fire Grants Update

Branham reminded the Board of its authorized \$1 million for Rim Fire restoration efforts and that he was delegated the authority to award certain grants if there is a timeliness issue. The first grant awarded was in partnership with the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions group and Tuolumne River Trust, which will be the fiscal agent and grant recipient. The grant is for a comprehensive spring assessment within the Rim Fire burn area. In order for the work to be done this summer, the grant was awarded in early August and work is already under way.

d. Miscellaneous Updates

Branham noted that the SNC in cooperation with the US Forest Service (USFS) co-convened workshops around the Rim Fire salvage logging environmental impact statements (EIS). Those workshops were an attempt to engage scientists, environmentalists, and industry around some of the ecological issues. Mandy Vance of the SNC did a great job facilitating that process. Branham indicated that the Record of Decision was signed last week by the outgoing forest supervisor, and generally speaking they did a nice job of thoughtful balance in terms of the economic and environmental issues. However, despite broad involvement from local and national environmental groups, it appears as if it is going to be litigated by a couple of organizations. Nonetheless, all this collaborative work helped to deliver a stronger decision and most of the environmental groups involved in the process will likely not join the legal challenge.

Boardmember Gyant stated the USFS did something they've never done, and it was collaborating on salvage work and being honest on the need for salvage. USFS and partners did a lot to protect the black-backed woodpecker and the California spotted owl. The prospect of litigation is disheartening, but the USFS getting the EIS out within a year is an amazing accomplishment. The process here can be an example for us. We ought to pause and think about how we approach burned landscapes. Taking a different approach as an agency is where we are headed.

e. Recreation and Tourism Presentation

Branham reminded Boardmembers of the thematic approach to Board meetings, with the current meeting having a recreation and tourism theme.

Bob Kingman, the SNC's Mt. Lassen Area Manager, started off by recognizing and appreciating all the recreational opportunities in the Sierra Nevada, and thanked our partners for making themselves available for the tour. Kingman provided the Board with an overview of the importance of tourism and recreation to the Region, including data relative to economic impact. He noted that in addition to the ongoing efforts on the Geotourism project, the SNC is now promoting the development of water trails, introducing Jaryd Block, a SNC AmeriCorps intern to brief the Board on that subject.

Block thanked the Board for the opportunity to present and reported that the SNC and AmeriCorps, started out looking at over 35,000 water bodies using high tech computer resources. Parameters including close access to roadways, local communities and towns along the trail, and public access were used to identify 82 water bodies with the greatest potential. From this analysis two sites were identified as the highest potential for water trail development: Lake Almanor in Plumas County and Crystal Basin.

Boardmember Stifel shared as demographics change, educating the public about where the opportunities to explore the outdoors will be very important.

Boardmember Hunt thanked everyone for a good tour and appreciated everyone participating. He noted that the Eastern Sierra economy is almost entirely based on recreation and tourism and that three of the seven statutory goals at the SNC have to do with recreation and tourism. He also introduced the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative, which will work with local political leadership to address issues relating to recreation and tourism on the eastside. The collaborative has already raised \$20,000. He indicated his desire for the SNC to provide some level of administrative, logistical, and facilitation support. Branham indicated that staff would work with Supervisor Hunt in identifying support that could be provided.

Boardmember Johnston expressed concerns over the research cited by Kingman, noting that that the data might not reflect reality. He noted that tourism economic analysis needs to be about the actual activities and must account for changes in the value of the dollar.

Boardmember Ishida offered that the Film Commission is generating revenue in Tulare County, noting that it is difficult however to get some permits on public land to do filming.

Public Comment

Stacey Corless, Supervisor Elect for Mono County – underscored Boardmember Hunt’s request for resources to assist in getting the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative off the ground. The connection between recreation, watershed, forest health, and environmental education is unmatched. Forest Plan revision is a critical piece and time is of the essence.

Jo Bacon, Mayor of Mammoth Lakes shared that they are ready and willing to be involved in the Collaborative, as the Council in 2010 approved the first ever recreation plan for that area. This is an acknowledgement of the key position of recreation in the overall economy.

John Henrie, of Mammoth Lakes Tourism, and Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Board, Mammoth Lakes Recreation, Visit CA Board, and others strongly supports the Collaborative effort. Henrie stated that transient occupancy taxes are the key to the solvency of local government.

VII. Deputy Attorney General’s Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, indicated she has been closely watching legislation proposed to reform California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in various ways. Two bills are on the Governor’s desk, AB 543 and AB 52. Several CEQA cases are pending in the Supreme Court involving the use of Categorical Exemptions that could provide guidance for future actions.

VIII. 2013-14 Annual Report (ACTION)

Avery reported it is that time of year again where staff has kicked off efforts to develop the 2013-14 Annual Report. The report will be four to six pages that meet statutory requirements and will focus on Fiscal Year 2013-14 activities and a bit of ten year anniversary perspective. A survey went out to over 2,000 stakeholders with the purpose of collecting feedback on how the SNC is doing in the Region. Boardmembers are encouraged to respond to that survey. The outline of the report is in the packet. Staff is suggesting the Board approve the proposed approach for completing the 2013-14 Annual Report and direct staff to develop and distribute the report.

ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded the motion to approve the proposed approach for completing the 2013-14 Annual Report and direct staff to develop and distribute the report. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Awards (ACTION)

Branham notified the Board that the SNC anticipates bringing a final round of Proposition 84 projects for Board consideration to the December meeting. Branham noted that the expectation is that the Board will authorize the remaining \$400,000 in

Proposition 84 funds (absent the Rim Fire funds) at that time. Branham then introduced SNC Area Managers Bob Kingman and Julie Bear.

Kingman described four projects being recommended for funding in the Mt. Lassen Area (#775, #805, #806, and #802) and Bear described the two projects from the Mt. Whitney Area (#794, #798).

Boardmember Johnston expressed his view that the projects were well documented, had multiple benefits, and were deserving of high evaluation scores.

Boardmember Kirkwood expressed concern about thinning projects occurring in a context where there private and public ownership and not being clear about what other landowners are doing in the area of a grant. Kirkwood also wondered whether funding a fuels reduction project where the greatest benefit might be improved grazing was appropriate. Kingman provided additional information regarding this project in response to the concerns.

ACTION: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded the motion to (a) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Lily Gap Forest Health Project, Phase II (SNC 794) with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for this project; (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Providence Mine Remediation Project (SNC 775) with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for this project; (c) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Alpine County Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Healthy Watershed Project (SNC 798); the Upper Stevens Meadow Restoration Project (SNC802); the Environs Mining Legacy Assessment Project (SNC805); the Robinson Mine Project (SNC 806); and (d) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Louise Jensen, Executive Director for Lassen Lands and Trails Trust – expressed appreciation for consideration of the Upper Stephens Meadow Restoration Project stating that water resources in the area are dire. Jensen noted that Eagle Lake is very low and that native California trout, one ecological value at risk, will benefit from

this project. Jensen also acknowledged the federal and state partners, private landowners and non-profits involved in the project.

X. Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan (ACTION)

Branham recapped the Action Plan discussion that took place at the June Board meeting highlighting Board direction for staff to prioritize development of a Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan.

Branham referred the Board to the draft State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests Report and asked that recommendations for edits be brought forward immediately to facilitate release of the final report in the coming weeks. Branham reminded Boardmembers that the purpose of the report is to tell the story of the resources at risk and the opportunities to enhance benefits from this Region, as well as to characterize current conditions on many of our forested lands.

Branham also noted that next steps include the development of a SNFCI Action Plan for Board consideration at the December meeting. He explained that the SNFCI Action Plan will provide a sense of how the SNC will approach its role in the Region relating to increasing pace and scale of forest restoration. Branham stated that staff will work with stakeholders to develop regional and watershed level plans that will add on to and enhance efforts that are already underway at the forest level, better quantifying the needs of restoration and the costs associated with it. He noted that the identified need will be compared to existing budgets to identify the gap. Finally he pointed out the goal would be to identify the restoration targets for a ten-year period for each watershed/national forest.

The Board engaged in discussion about elements that staff should consider including in the report to support a need for urgent action. Boardmember Kirkwood asked whether the areas of treatment in Yosemite National Park made a difference in the portions of the Rim Fire that burned there and whether there were numbers or maps there that would be worth adding to the report. Boardmember Giacomini asked whether some national forests would be willing to provide numbers regarding funding gaps, suggesting that this might shore up the argument that there is a problem.

Boardmember Gyant shared that USFS targets are set out of Washington, DC, and explained that forests develop five year vegetation management plans. Branham clarified that the action plan isn't looking to develop a five year vegetation management plan based on anticipated funding, but rather to identify what it will take to bring Sierra forests back to health, using the next ten years as a reference.

Boardmembers discussed the use of prescribed fire and the differences between open burning and combustion in a biomass facility. Gyant described the urgent need to be able to utilize biomass rather than leaving it on the landscape or piling and burning it.

Boardmember Ishida expressed the importance of County Supervisors having a comprehensive understanding of what it will take to restore Sierra forests to health on a large scale in order to advocate for additional resources.

Gyant stated that on USFS land in California there is probably between six and nine million acres of forests backlogged for treatment. Gyant said that they are aiming for 500,000 acres a year for treatment, requiring an additional \$300,000,000 per year to meet that goal, in addition to what is currently in place.

ACTION: Boardmember Roen moved and Boardmember Ishida seconded the motion to approve the “State of Sierra Forests” report and authorize staff to release the report upon finalization; and to approve the draft Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan and directed staff to work with interested parties in preparing a final draft for Board review and possible approval at the December 2014 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Boardmembers’ Comments

Boardmember Giacomini said Shasta County passed the Rural County Representative of California resolution addressing the dire conditions of our forests. She also noted that the Eiler Fire surrounded her property, some of her neighbors lost homes, while her family was fortunate in only losing lost miles of fence. She also noted that the site of the Board’s June reception was surrounded by the fire. The policy being discussed in SNFCI really needs to be addressed, as USFS and CAL FIRE handle fires differently.

XII. Public Comments

Kerri Timmer, SBC, provided an overview of Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CAMP). Four of these exist around California, and the goal is to identify various areas to work together and address climate change at a regional level. The goal of Sierra CAMP is to provide a rural perspective to work with other urban efforts. The core team includes SNC, SBC, and others, including local government members, researchers and/or academics.

Branham responded the SNC will participate initially to be sure the project is well understood and whether it fits our core mission and priorities.

XIII. Adjournment

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 12:12 pm.

Current Status - Budget

Staff have been busy preparing reports and responding to drills from the Department of Finance (DOF) to build the 2015-16 budget that will be released by the Governor on January 10th. At the end of September we received notification from DOF that Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) will receive an augmentation to our budget to account for the 2% staff salary increase and retirement rate increase. The 2% salary adjustment will be \$41,000 and the retirement adjustment will be \$45,000. It is not anticipated that there will be any other significant changes to our budget for 2015-16 (with the possible exception of grant funding under Proposition 1, which is addressed in a separate agenda item). These adjustments will be reflected in the March Board report. The current status of SNC's 2014-15 budget can be viewed in page 3 of this report.

Current Status - Human Resources

October was Disability Awareness Month, and SNC's Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) met to discuss issues that may affect disabled staff and our partners during the course of regular business. Per Government Code 19795 (b) each state agency shall establish a committee of employees to advise the head of the agency on matters relating to the formulation and implementation of a plan to overcome and correct any under representation. To increase participation and the effectiveness of SNC's DAC, the Tahoe Conservancy and Coastal Conservancy participate in the semiannual meetings.

The current SNC organizational chart can be viewed on the last page of this report.

Current Status - Business Services

SNC recognized October as Safety and Emergency Preparedness month. The SNC's safety committee met and discussed safety issues and solutions for SNC facilities and reminded staff about the process for evacuating SNC buildings. We had a successful evacuation drill at the Auburn Headquarters office.

Current Status - Information Technology

The IT staff have successfully completed a number of "migrations" to modernize and upgrade our technology capability, including use of the State's new mandatory, consolidated cloud-based email system, California Email Service (CES). This change gives SNC staff the ability to work remotely, in the event we encounter issues at our Headquarters Office. This change also helps us meet our 2014-15 Action Plan objective of ensuring continuity of essential functions and operations following a catastrophic event.

The SNC has also created an extranet site which will allow staff to collaborate more effectively with SNC Boardmembers, external partners and stakeholders. The first use of our extranet will be to share information and review and edit documents for the Sierra Nevada Forests and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Coordinating Council.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

**2014-15 SNC EXPENDITURES AND ENCUMBRANCES
 Through October 22, 2014**

State Operations				
<i>Personal Services</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
SALARIES AND WAGES	2,159,589	481,819	1,677,770	22%
STAFF BENEFITS	844,958	215,298	629,660	25%
<i>Personal Services, Totals</i>	<i>\$3,004,547</i>	<i>\$697,116</i>	<i>\$2,307,430</i>	<i>48%</i>

<i>Operating Expenses & Equipment</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
GENERAL EXPENSE	165,792	23,179	142,612	14%
TRAVEL - IS	57,252	15,363	41,889	27%
TRAVEL - OS	3,574	0	3,574	0%
TRAINING	25,000	4,535	20,465	18%
FACILITIES	295,495	88,717	206,778	30%
UTILITIES	16,800	3,963	12,837	24%
CONTRACTS- INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS	438,404	16,093	422,311	4%
CONTRACTS- EXTERNAL	192,213	181,758	10,455	95%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	91,320	13,405	77,915	15%
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0%
OTHER ITEMS OF EXPENSE	23,000	8,794	14,206	38%
PRO RATA (control agency costs)	238,603	0	238,603	0%
<i>Operating Expenses & Equipment, Totals</i>	<i>\$1,547,453</i>	<i>\$355,807</i>	<i>\$1,191,645</i>	<i>23%</i>

Local Assistance				
<i>Appropriation</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
2014 New Appropriation; Reverted 2007 & 2008 funds (14/15 Yr 1 of 3)	1,550,000	0	1,550,000	0%

	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
<i>State Operations</i>	<i>4,552,000</i>	<i>1,052,924</i>	<i>3,499,076</i>	<i>23%</i>
<i>Local Assistance</i>	<i>1,550,000</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1,550,000</i>	<i>0%</i>
SNC EXPENDITURES, TOTALS	<i>\$6,102,000</i>	<i>\$1,052,924</i>	<i>\$5,049,076</i>	<i>17%</i>



10/27/2014



Jim Branham
Executive Officer



Joan Keegan
Assistant Executive Officer



Amy Lussier
Division Chief
Administrative Services &
Grants Administration



Angela Avery
Division Chief
Regional Policy & Programs



Bob Kingman
Division Chief
Mt. Lassen Area



Julie Bear
Division Chief
Mt. Whitney Area
Located in Mariposa



Tristyn Armstrong
Administrative Assistant



Lynda Young
Personnel & Business
Services Officer



Matthew Daley
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Brittany Covich
Communication &
Outreach Coordinator



Linda Hansen
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR & PL: Lassen, Modoc,
Plumas, Sierra
Located in Susanville



Mandy Vance
Mt. Whitney Analyst
AR: Calaveras, Tuolumne
Located in Mariposa



Kim Carr
Sustainability Specialist
Located in So. Lake Tahoe



Dave Madrigal
Information Technology
Analyst



Lisa Forma
Grants Analyst
PL: Calaveras



Brandon Sanders
Legislative Coordinator
AR: Amador



Chris Dallas
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR & PL: Butte, Shasta,
Tehama
PL: Amador, Tuolumne



Danna Stroud
Mt. Whitney Analyst
AR & PL: Alpine, Inyo, Mono
Located in Bishop



Elissa Brown
Fund Development Analyst
Located in Mariposa

No
Picture
Available

Lisa Primeaux
Budget Analyst



Barbara Harriman
Grants Technician



Nic Enstice
Regional Science
Coordinator



Lynn Campbell
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR & PL: El Dorado,
Nevada, Sierra



Autumn Hutchings
Mt. Whitney Technician
AR: Mariposa
Located in Mariposa

No
Picture
Available

Liz vanWagtendonk
GIS Analyst
Located in Mariposa



Donna Martinez
Contracts & Procurement
Analyst



Theresa Burgess
Board Liaison



Julie Griffith-Flatter
Mt. Lassen Analyst
AR & PL: Placer, Yuba



Sarah Campe
Mt. Whitney Analyst
AR & PL: Fresno, Kern,
Madera, Tulare
Located in Three Rivers



Jennifer Barnes
Personnel Specialist



Marji Feliz
GSRC Coordinator



Denice Maberry
Administrative Technician
Auburn Receptionist



Belinda Gutierrez
Communication Support
Analyst

AR = Area Representative
PL = Project Lead

Background

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff continue work to increase awareness of the Sierra Nevada Region's important role in the State by engaging in activities that support the Action Plan focus areas approved by the Board in June, 2014.

In the past year, the SNC has significantly increased interaction with policy makers with a focus on legislators and legislative staff. Much of this activity focused on discussions related to the Water Bond. We have also increased our use of traditional and social media to highlight key issues in the Region and to showcase successes in implementing our Proposition 84 grant program, the release of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis and the State of Sierra Nevada's Forests report.

Current Status

Water Bond:

On November 4th California passed Proposition 1 - Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 - which authorizes the sale of \$7.5 billion in general obligation bonds and provides the SNC with a \$25 million allocation. SNC staff will be discussing next steps relating to SNC funding in the bond in a separate agenda item.

State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests Report:

SNC staff released the State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests report (Report) on September 22nd. To generate interest in the Report, a press release was sent to 260+ media contacts as well as to multiple SNC email lists. In addition, staff sent a modified version of the press release as an email to a huge number of stakeholders and partners, posted links to the Report on social media sites including Facebook and Twitter, and highlighted the Report on the SNC website. Staff has been receiving positive feedback from partners and the Report has received coverage in multiple news outlets and partner publications. Executive Officer, Jim Branham, provided a briefing on the Report and SNC's plans to address the issues raised to the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) at their recent Board meeting. Many rural counties are adopting resolutions expressing concerns over the dire conditions of many Sierra forests.

In an effort to keep attention on the Report and to facilitate sharing the important messages within the Report, staff created a map journal which is available on the SNC website, and a power point presentation which can be used by partners and others. Additionally, near the end of October, staff shared recently released US Forest Service (USFS) fire and soil burn severity maps from the King fire via the Sierra Wildfire Wire blog. These maps provided staff with an opportunity to emphasize the continued upward trajectory of the regional fire severity trends identified in the Report, and highlight the potential long term impacts resulting from severe fire events. Staff will continue to share the Report with partners, through our social media accounts, and with the news media as opportunities arise.

Cap and Trade Auction Revenue:

SNC staff are actively working with other state departments that have received Cap and Trade Auction Revenue for activities consistent with the SNC's mission and strategic plan, including CalFire, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Strategic Growth Council.

SNC staff is also participating in the Forest Carbon Action Team's efforts to develop a statewide plan that will identify actions that can enhance the role that the state's forests can play in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The plan to be developed will be important in guiding further investment of Cap and Trade Auction Revenue in the forest sector and will identify key policies considerations affecting our ability to maintain our forests ability to store carbon.

We are likewise coordinating with the Sierra Business Council and other partners in the formation of the Sierra Climate & Adaptation Partnership (Sierra CAMP). While SNC's role is yet to be defined, we are exploring future opportunities for communication, education, and outreach to increase understanding of the consequences of climate change in the Sierra Nevada and the relevance of those impacts to the State; and improving the Region's access to funding.

Meetings and legislative actions:

Following the September, 2014 Board meeting, SNC staff, with the assistance of Secretary Laird, met with Assemblymembers Rich Gordon (D-Menlo Park) and Mark Stone (D-Monterey Bay) to discuss the needs of the Sierra Nevada Region and to solicit their support in upcoming issues before the legislature. These members recognize the importance of the Sierra Nevada to the health and well-being of the State and have agreed to work closely with the SNC and our partners on key Sierra issues.

Additionally, staff have had meetings with staff in Assemblymember Mike Gatto's (D-Los Angeles) office and the Governor's office to discuss the State of the Sierra Nevada's Report and needed next steps.

Current Sierra Nevada Research:

SNC is tracking research relevant to the Sierra Nevada. Summaries of how the three new research papers identified below may impact the Region and links to the original articles are provided in Attachment A:

- Mountain runoff vulnerability to increased evapotranspiration with vegetation expansion;
- Sustainable biochar to mitigate global climate change; and,
- Trends in Wildfire Severity: 1984 to 2010 in the Sierra Nevada, Modoc Plateau, and Southern Cascades, California, USA.

Regional Tour:

The King Fire unfortunately provides yet another opportunity to educate policy-makers on the consequences of failing to adequately address our forest conditions. SNC staff worked with the Eldorado National Forest, USFS Region 5, El Dorado County Supervisor Briggs and a number of key partners to put together a legislative staff tour of the King Fire on November 19th. The purpose of the tour is to expose legislative staff to the aftermath and implications of a large, intense significant fire. The field trip focused on the impacts on water quality and supply, GHG and pollutant emissions, energy production, habitat, wood products and biomass and recreation. A verbal update will be provided by staff at this Board meeting.

FY 2013-14 Annual Report:

The 2013-14 Annual Report was approved for completion and distribution at the September Board meeting and the final Report was distributed to the legislature, administration and the public in November. Hard copies of the Report will be distributed to SNC Boardmembers at this meeting.

Next Steps

The development of Regional and watershed level action plans to address watershed health in the Sierra Nevada will be a primary focus of the SNC's outreach efforts going forward. Staff will be actively tracking, and participating in, legislative and administrative activities that provide opportunities for addressing key issues.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff is regularly tracking research that has relevance to the work of the organization and Sierra Nevada Region. Below are some examples of research of which staff has recently become aware:

Mountain runoff vulnerability to increased evapotranspiration with vegetation expansion:
(This article is not yet available to the public free of charge. To view the abstract visit the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences website](#).)

Climate change is expected to lead to the warming of higher elevation areas the Sierra Nevada mountains. This could allow vegetation to move upward into areas where previously cold temperatures limited survival. If this happens, it would expand the area of vegetation growth in the Sierra, and therefore an increase in water use by vegetation. Based on these assumptions, Goulden and Bales estimate that in the Kings River basin, where their research was focused, extra vegetation growth would reduce annual river flows by 26% by the year 2100. The authors are clear that their approach was simple and has limitations, requiring further study. With such large implications for potential decreases in water flows from the primary water source for California, this is an issue that needs a closer look.

Sustainable biochar to mitigate global climate change:

When biomass is removed from overgrown forests during fuel thinning treatments, it can be burned in bioenergy facilities to create energy. These treatments greatly reduce wildfire risk and severity and the bioenergy facilities emit very little emissions compared to either a wildfire or pile and burning makes the process essentially carbon neutral. However, bioenergy facilities can be tuned to create both energy and biochar - charcoal produced from plant matter and stored in the soil as a means of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (definition from Google). Biochar is becoming a popular soil amendment, where its qualities not only help plants grow, but can actually increase water storage by the soil. Additionally, biochar can sequester carbon in the soil for hundreds to thousands of years. The findings of this paper suggest that if woody material from a fuel thinning project is sent to a facility that produces both biochar and bioenergy (energy production needs to be reduced about 20% to optimally produce biochar), the whole process would be carbon negative (meaning the overall activity would result in more carbon stored than emitted). This paper looks at more potential bioenergy fuel sources beyond just wood, but it suggests that if all of these source materials were used to optimally create biochar, 12% of our current emissions could be offset through the use of this biochar in our soils.

Trends in Wildfire Severity: 1984 to 2010 in the Sierra Nevada, Modoc Plateau, and Southern Cascades, California, USA:

In this paper, authors Miller and Safford looked at fires larger than 200 acres in size that occurred in the regions noted in the title from 1984 to 2010. The authors focused on two forest types – Yellow pine-mixed conifer (YPMC) and red fir (RF). On YPMC forests, their results indicate that the proportion of high severity has increased from approximately 20% in each larger fire to over 30% in 2010. Red fir forests did not experience such an increase. The authors believe this difference between forest types

is that across their study area, many YPMC forests are well beyond their regular fire-return interval and that excess fuel is overloading those forests. On the other hand, red fir forests naturally burn less frequently, so their fire-return interval has not been upset to the extent of YPMC forests. The authors found that the larger the fire, the greater the chance that high severity fire covers a larger portion of the burn area. Interestingly, the authors compare their findings to those of studies done in the Yosemite National Park, where it was found that there is no trend in high severity in fires. The authors believe that the difference comes from the active management of the forests within the Yosemite National Park boundary and that “a shift in [Forest Service] fire management policy similar to Yosemite’s may have some effect on lowering the proportion of high severity on [Forest Service] lands.”

Background

In 2009, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) began coordinating the Great Sierra River Cleanup (GSRC) – a volunteer event focused on removing trash from the rivers, lakes, and streams of the Sierra Nevada. This project aimed to expand upon the cleanup efforts of numerous groups and organizations by establishing and supporting cleanups in watersheds throughout the Sierra Nevada Region. The Cleanup is done in conjunction with California Coastal Cleanup Day, which is organized by the California Coastal Commission.

During the first five years, the GSRC attracted nearly 19,000 volunteers and succeeded in removing nearly 600 tons of trash from more than 1,700 streamside miles. The event has consistently received support from California legislators, both those representing the Sierra and those from other parts of the state.

This year’s Cleanup, which occurred on September 20, 2014, was planned and coordinated in-house by SNC staff members.

Current Status

More than 5,600 volunteers attended the 2014 Great Sierra River Cleanup and removed over 90 tons of trash and recyclables from 22 different watersheds. Cleanups occurred at 176 different sites in coordination with 66 nonprofits and governmental agencies. Cleanups took place in the following watersheds:

Ahwahnee	Kings River	Southern Sierra
American River	Mariposa	S. Fork American River
Bear River	Merced River	Stanislaus River
Cosumnes River	Middle Sierra	Truckee River
E. Fork Carson River	Mokelumne River	Tuolumne River
E. Walker River	Owens River	Yuba River
Feather River	Sacramento River	
Kern River	San Joaquin River	

Sponsors for the 2014 Great Sierra River Cleanup included:

Monetary

- Sacramento Municipal Utility District
- Sierra Nevada Brewing
- Sierra Pacific Industries

In Kind

- Adventure Sports Journal
- California Conservation Corps
- California Ski Industry Association
- Camp-California!
- Danner Boots
- Jeanie’s Creekside Café

In Kind Continued

- Outdoor California Magazine
- Sierra Heritage Magazine
- YubaNet.com

Sixteen California legislators pledged their support for the event by becoming honorary co-chairs:

Senators

- Ellen Corbett (D – East Bay)
- Ted Gaines (R – Rocklin)
- Jim Nielsen (R – Gerber)
- Fran Pavley (D – Agoura Hills)

Assembly Members

- Luis Alejo (D - Salinas)
- Tom Ammiano (D – San Francisco)
- Rob Bonta (D – Oakland)
- Joan Buchanan (D – Alamo)
- Connie Conway (R – Tulare)
- Ken Cooley (D – Rancho Cordova)
- Beth Gaines (R – Roseville)
- Richard Gordon (D – Menlo Park)
- Richard Pan (D – Sacramento)
- Jim Patterson (R – Fresno)
- Henry Perea (D – Fresno)
- Susan Talamantes Eggman (D – Stockton)

Senator Gaines (R) worked to promote the event to his constituents through his newsletter.

Final results and data by cleanup site can be found on SNC's Great Sierra River Cleanup web page: <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/our-work/rivercleanup/2014GSRCresults>. Photos have been uploaded to the Great Sierra River Cleanup Facebook fan page, and the SNC Twitter account was used to tweet totals, facts, and interesting items found. Media coverage for the Great Sierra River Cleanup appeared in 23 print publications or online news sites, and was also provided by two radio stations and three television stations.

Next Steps

Next year's Great Sierra River Cleanup will be held on September 19, 2015, and initial planning has already started. Contracting with the Department of Water Resources for graphic design services is underway, and SNC staff will work to coordinate training sessions for Cleanup Coordinators in the spring of 2015. We will also focus on

expanding the number of cleanup sites with existing partners and groups in watersheds and communities that do not currently have established events.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.

Agenda Item VIIIc Great Sierra River Cleanup 2014 Final Report

**Presented by:
Marji Feliz**

2014 GSRC Final Totals

- 5,650 Volunteers
- 577 River Miles
- 22 Rivers
- Trash: 165,135 lbs.
- Recyclables: 15,273 lbs.

Grand Total:
More than 90 tons



Statewide Final Totals

- 66,292 volunteers
- 1,679 miles cleaned
- 1,025,411 lbs. of trash
- 98,761 lbs. of recyclables

Grand Total: 1,124,172 lbs.
Or more than 5,000 tons



Unusual Items

Rubber ducky dressed as a hockey player, master cylinder for a 1933 truck, Barbie doll arm, Bullwinkle Moose stuffed animal, Christmas tree lights, horse hitching post, and a Samurai sword.



Legislative Co-Chairs

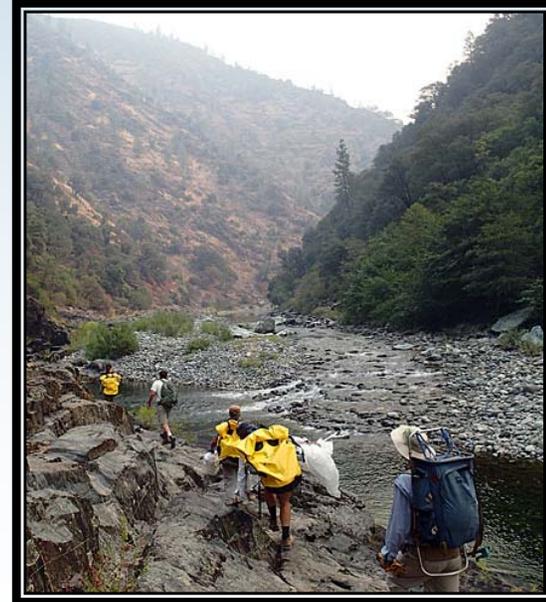
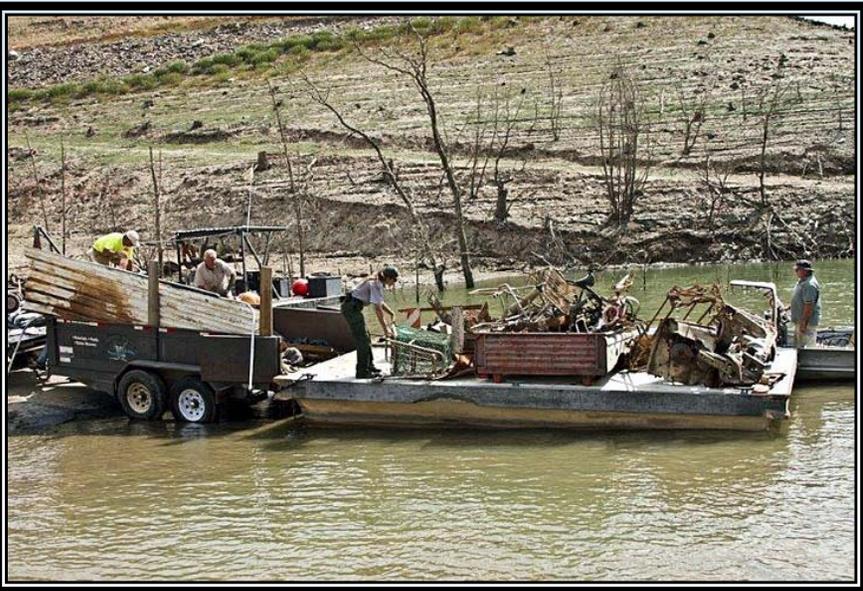
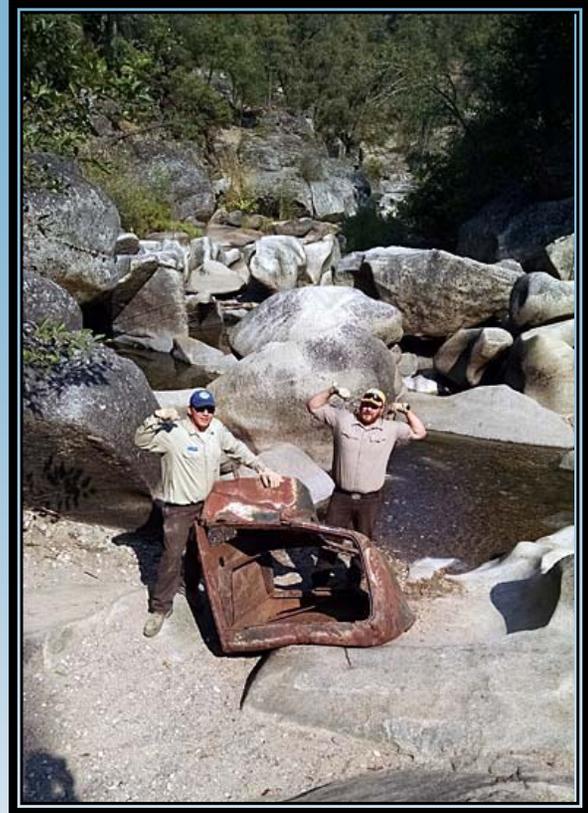
Assembly Members

Beth Gaines
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Luis Alejo
Rich Gordon
Richard Pan
Rob Bonta
Susan Talamantes Eggman
Tom Ammiano

Senators

Ellen Corbett
Fran Pavley
Jim Nielsen
Ted Gaines





Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has met quarterly throughout the Region since June 2006. In 2012 the Governing Board approved an ongoing schedule that provides for the March meetings to be held in Sacramento annually. The other three quarterly Board meetings are held in the Region, rotating between Subregions. The SNC Board meetings in the Region include a field tour on Wednesday afternoon and the Board meeting on Thursday.

Current Status

SNC Staff is working on details for the March Board meeting in Sacramento, which will likely include a workshop or other forum relating the issue of increasing the pace and scale of watershed/forest restoration in the Region on Wednesday. More information will be shared as details are finalized.

Next Steps

The following schedule is proposed for 2015:

- March 4 & 5, Sacramento
- June 3 & 4, South Subregion
- September 2 & 3, North Central Subregion
- December 2 & 3, South Central Subregion

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the proposed schedule for 2015.

Background

Over the past few years, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has been actively involved in issues relating to forest and community health. The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) was adopted by the Board in 2011 and was endorsed by all 22 Sierra counties, as well as numerous other groups and organizations. The Initiative called for parties to work together in a collaborative manner with the objectives of restoring forests to ecological health and improving local communities' social and economic well-being.

As a part of SNFCI, the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council was formed under SNC's leadership. Representatives on the Coordinating Council include a wide range of diverse perspectives including local government, environmental and conservation organizations, the wood products industry, fire safe councils, community organizations, recreational groups and public land management agencies. Boardmember Kirkwood serves as the Board Liaison to the Coordinating Council.

At the same time, a number of local collaborative efforts with objectives consistent with the Initiative have begun in the Region. The SNC has provided substantial financial and staff support to many of these collaboratives and was instrumental in the creation of a number of them.

Shortly after this initiative began, the U.S. Forest Service Region 5 released its "Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration" which articulated the need to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration. This document is consistent with the Initiative and has helped to further bring parties together on the many challenges that we face in achieving our objectives.

At the June 2014 Board meeting, the Board directed SNC staff to develop a plan that ensures that the issues being addressed under the SNFC Initiative were the organization's top priority. In response to this direction, staff prepared the "State of Sierra Forests" report, which represents our best understanding of current conditions at this time. The Board approved this report for distribution at the September Board meeting, noting that the report may be updated from time to time as new information becomes available or circumstances change.

For the September Board meeting, SNC staff also developed a draft SNFCI Action Plan, which addresses issues at the Regional level as well as developing a plan at the watershed/county/National Forest level. The Board approved the Draft SNFCI Action Plan at the September meeting and instructed SNC staff to move forward with further development of a more detailed iteration of the SNFCI Action Plan for the Board's consideration at the December meeting.

While the pace and scale of work continues to lag well behind what is needed, it is important to acknowledge that there are a number of positive developments in the efforts to restore our forests to ecological health. In carrying out the Board's direction, the SNC will enhance and build upon these efforts, as well as identifying more ways for

the organization to increase pace and scale. An example of the activities occurring include:

- SNC's continuing involvement on a number of fronts in an effort to increase the utilization of biomass removed as part of forest restoration;
- SNC's ongoing support of local collaborative efforts; and,
- The work of the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council in their five focus areas:
 - Addressing Restoration at a Larger Landscape Level
 - Increased Use of Prescribed and Managed Fire
 - Protecting and Increasing Wood/Biomass Processing Infrastructure
 - Ensuring Local Socio-Economic Benefits from Restoration Efforts
 - Potential for Restoration Treatment on Steep Slopes

Current Status

The additional emphasis on these issues occurs recognizing that the conditions faced in the Region are growing even more critical and require a response with a high degree of urgency. The "State of the Sierra Forests" report was released in September and has been widely distributed throughout the Region and among policymakers and media. This report raised the alarm about the urgent need to return our Sierra Nevada forests and watersheds to a state of resiliency. Staff is proposing to provide the roadmap to this future resiliency through the SNFCI Action Plan (Attachment A), which identifies the actions that the SNC will organize and coordinate with a wide array of partners.

While the primary focus of our efforts will continue to be federally managed forests, watershed level efforts will take a more holistic "all lands" perspective. The truism that "fire respects no boundaries" emphasizes the need to consider forest condition and potential actions regardless of ownership (and reinforces the need to engage CalFire and private landowners in our efforts). Large fires such as the Rim Fire and King Fire not only pose threats to communities and resources, the expense of fire suppression often results in reducing funds available for restoration efforts. In addition, the flow of salvaged logs from these fires can easily meet or exceed mill capacity in the Region, once again resulting in restoration projects with a log component becoming infeasible. We find ourselves in a cycle that causes us to fall further behind in needed restoration work, making a bad situation even worse. All indications suggest that the changing climate (and the current drought) will result in a longer fire season, with more large intense fires into the future.

Further, staff is recommending the development of a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (Sierra Nevada WIP), using the SNFCI Action Plan as the centerpiece. While the SNFCI efforts will continue to focus on the forest/fire/community issues, there is a need to develop a more comprehensive approach to watershed health to ensure that aquatic, meadow and habitat resources are protected and restored. The Sierra Nevada WIP, loosely modeled after the successful Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, will engage other partners, agencies and stakeholders in an integrated and holistic approach to watershed health issues. The experience in Tahoe

has shown that a well-articulated program with clear objectives and specific projects can be very successful in drawing investment and support.

The Sierra Nevada WIP will build on the SNFCI Action Plan's efforts to achieve the following key objectives:

- Quantification of the specific projects/activities needed to restore Sierra Nevada forests and watersheds to a state of resilience and the cost of their implementation. This includes factors beyond the natural landscape, such as wood and biomass processing infrastructure capacity and local capacity for collaboration.
- Increase in state and federal investment in forest and watershed restoration activities, as well as securing investment from downstream beneficiaries.
- Address state and federal policy issues that will remove impediments and increase the pace and scale of forest and watershed restoration.

Through the development of the Sierra Nevada WIP, SNC will continue to operate in a collaborative manner, interacting with the wide range of stakeholders involved with these issues. We will build on the consensus that exists on the need to act to increase pace and scale of restoration and the efforts that are currently underway to address this problem.

Next Steps

SNC staff will continue to share the "State of Sierra Forests" report with the public, as well as engage our partners in sharing the report as widely as possible. This report will be utilized as a companion piece to our SNFCI Action Plan and in development of the Sierra Nevada WIP to help make the case for increased investment in the Sierra Nevada. As noted above, the SNC may update this report from time to time to add new information or address emerging issues.

Upon approval by the Governing Board, SNC staff will begin development of the Sierra Nevada WIP, with the SNFCI Action Plan as the centerpiece. The first steps will be the development of a more detailed work plan to guide our efforts, initial gathering and analysis of relevant information and engaging partners in the development of a draft Sierra Nevada WIP at both the regional and local levels.

It is anticipated that an initial draft Sierra Nevada WIP, as well as some pilot watershed level WIP assessments, will be brought to the Board at the March, 2015 meeting. This rollout of the Regional Sierra Nevada WIP will coincide with the SNC's 10 year celebration, and possible additional events may include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing with key partners and a potential Sierra Watersheds Summit.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve the SNFCI Action Plan and authorize staff to continue with its implementation, including the development of a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program.



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Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan

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Introduction

There is a growing understanding that many Sierra Nevada forests are not healthy and that overgrown forests are susceptible to disease and intense wildfire. There is likewise broad consensus that science-based ecological restoration of our Sierra Nevada forests must be dramatically increased in order to stem the tide of large, uncharacteristic wildfires. These wildfires threaten the very lifeblood of California -- the forested watersheds of the Sierra Nevada.

The State of Sierra Nevada's Forests Report, released in September 2014, identified the wide range of benefits provided by our Sierra Nevada forests and watersheds that are at risk, including but not limited to providing 60% of California's developed water supply through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta; massive amounts of carbon storage, assisting in the State's efforts to combat climate change; crucial habitat to hundreds of species; world-class recreational opportunities enjoyed by millions from around the world; and major production of wood products and hydro-electric power.

The key findings from this report included:

- The United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 5 estimates that between six and nine million acres of lands for which they have management responsibility are in need of restoration. In order to return these lands to ecological health, a two to three times increase in the pace and scale of ecological restoration must occur.
- The amount of area consumed by fire in the Sierra Nevada continues to increase. More land has burned in the first four-and-a-half-years of this decade than seven entire decades in the past.
- Between 1984 and 2010, there was a significant increase in the number of acres within a forest fire burning at high-intensity, from an average of 20% in mid-1980s to over 30% by 2010.
- High-intensity burn areas can experience runoff and erosion rates five to ten times greater than low- or moderate-intensity burn areas. The sediment that is carried in the runoff not only degrades water quality and damages infrastructure, it fills reservoirs, reducing storage capacity.
- The 2013 Rim Fire, the largest fire in the recorded history of the Sierra Nevada, burned 257,000 acres, almost 40% of which was at high intensity. Estimates are that that fire produced the same amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that 2.3 million vehicles produce in a year.

The report also identified the main impediments to increasing pace and scale, and potential solutions to these challenges, which included: inadequate funding available in relation to the need for forest restoration; the need for more efficient planning processes and larger landscape restoration through collaborative efforts; the need for enhanced wood and biomass processing; and the need for increased use of fire as a forest restoration tool.

Failure to understand the urgency of the situation in the Sierra Nevada will have devastating impacts on California's environment and economy. The potential for more megafires like the Rim Fire is high and the trend of larger, more intense fires is clear, with the current drought and ongoing temperature increases making the situation all the more urgent.

The State of Sierra Nevada's Forests Report raised the alarm about the dire conditions of our forests, and the many repercussions that could result from not taking active steps to restore them to a state of resiliency. Through the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has developed a framework for aggressively addressing these issues. It will require a renewed commitment at the state, federal and local levels. The alternative of the status quo is simply not acceptable.

The focus of the SNFCI Action Plan is to address key issues and impediments affecting successful achievement of increased forest resiliency through restoration in the Sierra Nevada Region. This plan largely serves as a Regional blueprint and will guide the development of Watershed Level plans. Together these efforts will further identify and refine the scope, scale and cost of ecological restoration of our forests. It is also anticipated that this Plan will be integrated into a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, aimed at addressing watershed health in a coordinated and holistic manner.

Goals and Objectives of the SNFCI Action Plan

The key objectives of the Action Plan are:

- Identify and quantify the specific projects needed to restore Sierra Nevada forests to a state of resilience and the cost of their implementation. This data will include factors beyond the natural landscape, including but not limited to wood and biomass processing infrastructure capacity and local capacity for collaboration.
- Increase state and federal investment in forest restoration activities, as well as securing investment from downstream beneficiaries and the private sector. The SNFCI Action Plan will be used as an engagement tool to attract investment in the Sierra Nevada by clearly identifying the benefits restoring forest resiliency, as well as the negative consequences of failing to do so.
- Address state and federal policy issues that will remove impediments and increase the pace and scale of forest restoration and improving the socio-economic well-being of Sierra communities. While additional investment for needed restoration is critical, this plan identifies a number of policy issues currently serve as impediments to restoration.

Desired Outcomes:

Because federally managed lands comprise more than half of the forested land in Sierra Nevada, and many of these forest are unhealthy, increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration on these lands is the primary focus of this Plan. Implementation of the Plan will improve forest resilience, thereby reducing the risk of large damaging fires.

This will result in a number of important outcomes:

- Increased investment in ecological restoration of forests in the Sierra Nevada;
- Increased awareness among policy-makers, downstream beneficiaries and other stakeholders regarding the urgent need for and benefits of forest restoration in the Sierra Nevada;
- Protection of people, communities and property for large damaging fire;
- Protection of California water supply through improved water quality, yield and reliability;
- Protection of existing water storage capacity through reduced erosion
- Enhanced storage of carbon in healthy forests;
- Reduced GHG and particulate matter emissions from wildfire;
- Protection of important habitat;
- Protection of recreational opportunities; and
- Increased economic and social well-being in Sierra communities.

Building on Existing Efforts:

The Plan is being developed by SNC in cooperation with the wide variety of partners that share the SNC Vision on these issues. This effort builds upon and integrates a number of existing efforts at the state, federal and local levels, including:

- The 2011 SNFCI Resolution.
- The vision articulated in the USFS Region 5 Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration.
- Existing local collaborative efforts throughout the Sierra Nevada
- The SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council's effort to address key policy issues affecting the pace and scale of restoration.
- The California Bioenergy Action Plan.
- The California Water Action Plan.
- The State Water Plan and Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Plans.
- The AB 32 Scoping Plan Update and the Safeguarding California report.

Working with Current and New Partners

In order to be successful, partnerships must be established and expanded. Through SNC's work on these issues over the past few years, there is a strong foundation of collaborative and partnership in the Region. The SNC works closely with our federal partners, the SNFCI Council and its members, county governments, resource conservation districts, local water agencies, local collaboratives and organizations and key state agencies. At the watershed level, the SNC may work with interested parties to create a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or Joint Powers Authority (JPA) committing parties to work together to achieve agreed upon objectives in a more formal way. The watershed-based efforts will include coordination with the IRWM organizations in the area.

In order to maximize opportunities for successful implementation, initial targets for new or enhanced engagement in this effort include the following:

- Downstream Beneficiaries (Including water and irrigation districts, electric utility providers, the agricultural community, etc.)
- Water agency associations
- CAL FIRE
 - Coordination on various grant funding programs that focus on private lands
 - Use of the CA Fire Plan
- CA Department of Fish And Wildlife
 - Review key plans such as Wildlife Action Plan to identify overlapping objectives
 - Coordinate on various grant funding programs aimed at improving watershed conditions.
- CA Department of Water Resources (DWR)
 - Work through the IRWM program to secure additional funding for watershed health activities
 - Work with DWR to identify other investment opportunities to address water yield and existing storage issues
- CA Water Commission
 - Initial interest has been expressed in the potential of increasing water yield and protecting existing storage
- Air Resources Board
 - Work with them in the various implementation efforts of AB 32, as well as addressing increased air pollution resulting from large wildfires
- Private Sector Investment
 - Private investment will be needed if efforts to establish additional infrastructure are to be successful
- Tribal Organizations
 - Most local collaboratives have tribal involvement, but opportunity exists to expand the role of tribes

Potential Performance Metrics: (as more data and analysis occurs, these may change)

- Increase in federal, state and beneficiary funding for restoration efforts
- Increase in restoration occurring
 - Acres of fuels reduction, forest restoration
 - Acres of meadow restored
 - Communities and other at risk values protected
 - Critical habitat protected
 - Energy and water infrastructure protected
- Maintaining existing, and developing new, wood and biomass processing facilities (including currently non-operational facilities)

- Bone dry tons of biomass utilized
- Board feet produced
- Kilowatts of Forest Biomass Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created
- Increase in amount federal contracting dollars staying in local communities
- Tons of Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided

Implementation

In coordination with the USFS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council, Sierra Nevada counties, other State agencies and key partners identified above, the SNC will coordinate implementation of the SNFCI Action Plan in the Sierra Nevada Region. This document, with additional refinements will serve as a regional plan and will help to guide more details efforts at the watershed level. Initial efforts at the watershed level include working cooperatively to identify 10 year forest restoration goals by watershed/National Forest, including estimates of acres in need of treatment by type and costs associated with such treatment. Working with local stakeholders, additional restoration needs will be identified. As policy and investment issues are addressed at the Regional level, these plans will provide the specific projects and activities needed to achieve restoration goals.

The following three main goals have been identified, along with initial actions needed to accomplish them.

Goal 1: Identify and quantify the scope and cost of specific projects and activities needed to restore Sierra Nevada forests to a state of resilience.

It is important that the full scope of the problem we face and the costs associated with addressing it is well understood. Initial rough estimates suggest that three to five million acres of USFS lands in the Sierra are in need of restoration. By identifying the lands in need of restoration forest by forest a more refined estimate of need and cost will be developed (a similar exercise is being discussed with the Bureau of Land Management).

The SNC will work with the agencies and key stakeholders in the watershed in developing the watershed-specific action plan. There will also be an effort to actively engage downstream beneficiaries of the watershed in the process. While initial assessment of needs will occur across the Region, the SNC is proposing working initially with one or two National Forests and the stakeholders in those watersheds in developing the site specific plans.

Key Actions

- Using available data, existing restoration targets and local knowledge a watershed level assessment will be conducted to establish the scope and cost of the restoration projects needed.
- The assessment will use the following categories as the starting point for developing the quantification of restoration activities needed.
 - ✓ Mechanical Fuels Reduction
 - ✓ Prescribed Fire

- ✓ Disease/Forest Stand Improvement
 - ✓ Post-fire Restoration
 - ✓ Meadow and Stream Restoration
 - ✓ Wood Processing Infrastructure
 - ✓ Habitat Restoration
- Identify the gap that exists between the financial and other resources that are available and needed to get our forests back to a state of resiliency at both a regional and local level, and use that to build a case for increased investment in restoration.
 - Identify critical relevant GIS data layers to be used to guide the watershed level assessment using the initial list below to begin the analysis:
 - ✓ National Forest boundaries overlaid with watershed boundaries (to assist in identifying most appropriate level of local assessment) (SNC has this)
 - ✓ Fire history
 - ✓ Fire Return Interval Departure
 - ✓ Past forest restoration treatment areas (over past ten years)
 - ✓ Areas identified for treatment through National Forest Vegetative Management plans, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other planning processes
 - ✓ Existing (open) and closed wood and biomass processing facilities in the Sierra Nevada
 - ✓ Research on areas where restoration activities are constrained
 - ✓ Basic Carbon Storage in the Sierra Nevada (above ground)
 - ✓ Water Yield
 - ✓ Fire vegetative and soil burn intensity

Goal 2: Increase state and federal investment in forest restoration activities, as well as securing investment from downstream beneficiaries.

Current funding levels are inadequate to meet the need for forest restoration, especially for critical projects that don't "pay for themselves" with removed material (projects where there is little or no value/market for materials). The development of a sound quantification of the need and the potential adverse impacts of inaction will serve as the basis for increasing investment in forest restoration. The State of Sierra Nevada's Forests report provides a more detailed description of the values and benefits at risk given the current and predicted future conditions, making a compelling case for increasing pace and scale of restoration.

A number of key actions have been identified to achieve this goal, including the following:

Key Actions (will be expanded further as the Action Plan is developed):

- Further engage other state and federal agencies whose mission would benefit from successful restoration efforts (many are already engaged in our efforts), including:

- CAL FIRE, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Water Resources, Department of Conservation, Wildlife Conservation Board, California Conservation Corps, California Air Resources Board (CARB), and Energy Commission at the state level;
 - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Reclamation at the federal level;
- Support efforts to ensure that funding for restoration efforts is not used to pay for unanticipated fire suppression costs at the federal level. The current practice results in a never ending cycle of inadequate restoration activity resulting in more large damaging fires, which once again strips funding for restoration.
 - Identify and secure state, federal, local, and private funding sources that present potential new investment, including California Cap and Trade Auction Revenue, California Water Bond Funding and increased federal appropriations for restoration.
 - Engage downstream beneficiaries who have a stake in the health of Sierra Nevada watersheds.
 - Agricultural and municipal water agencies that utilize Sierra water
 - Electric utilities with infrastructure in the Region
 - Continue to focus SNC resources on funding projects that align with the SNFCI Action Plan.
 - Work with key partners to build a coalition to support the plan and educate decision-makers and funders about the needs using best available information as to the benefits of increased investment and the consequence of failing to do so.
 - Develop performance measures to assess our level of success in meeting plan objectives at the regional and local levels

Goal 3: Address state and federal policy issues that will remove impediments to increasing the pace and scale of ecologically sound forest restoration.

Though there are many positive efforts underway in the Sierra Nevada, the need for restoration is so great that our progress towards restoring balance and health to our forests, communities and economies is inadequate. Major impediments beyond funding exist, and must be addressed on the appropriate scale if we expect to make meaningful progress towards our goals.

An initial effort to identify and address significant impediments is being undertaken through the SNFCI Coordinating Council, working in concert with the USFS and local collaboratives. These issues, described below will remain the focus of the Council. Positively addressing these issues, together with increased investment, creates our best opportunity to significantly increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration work in the Sierra.

ISSUE 1: Inadequate wood processing infrastructure: In order to adequately handle the pace and scale of needed restoration, wood and biomass processing infrastructure in the Sierra Nevada must be enhanced. The increase of large fires, such as the Rim

Fire, puts additional pressure on the system as the limited capacity for wood processing in the Sierra Nevada becomes focused on processing salvage logged timber. This throws into question the fate of the desperately needed restoration treatments slated for unburned but overgrown areas, if there is nowhere for this wood to go for processing.

Key Actions (will be expanded further as Plan is developed):

- Identify and support highest priority opportunities to establish community scale biomass energy facilities, continue coordination with partners on Public Utilities Commission (PUC) SB 1122 process and identify additional policy actions needed.
- Identify actions that can be taken to protect existing infrastructure and opportunities to open closed facilities.
- Explore opportunities for co-location of associated wood product businesses on existing wood processing properties.
- Work with USFS Region 5 to engage more actively with other federal agencies who could provide funding and/or technical assistance with enhancing wood processing infrastructure in the Sierra Nevada (USDA Rural Development, Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, etc.) so that federal investment opportunities are maximized.
- Explore new opportunities to make biomass utilization more profitable through the production of biochar and other byproducts.
- Explore cutting edge biofuel production technology (like oxygen extraction from biomass, which is showing promise in laboratory testing).
- Promote large landscape restoration efforts and the use of stewardship contracts, which will help address supply reliability, a key component to gaining capital investment.
- Utilize and encourage well-grounded scientific studies to build the case for biomass utilization

ISSUE 2: Increased use of fire as restoration tool: Acknowledging the important ecological role of fire and increasing the use of prescribed and managed fire as a forest restoration tool is necessary. The CARB and local air districts impose very tight restrictions on burn windows and duration of prescribed fires, which can make it difficult to implement them. Unfortunately, this may have the unintended consequence of enabling larger, more damaging fires to occur, which emit far more pollution into the atmosphere than would have been released by the prescribed fires. Providing greater flexibility to use fire to prevent megafires is essential to restoring our forests to resiliency. There is also the need to investigate the issue of liability for the public agencies and private landowners as it relates to the use of prescribed fire. A key component of this effort includes working proactively with local communities and those affected by the smoke resulting from prescribed fire to that impacts can be minimized and a greater understanding of the need for this activity established.

Key Actions (will be expanded further as Plan is developed):

- Encourage and support efforts to build stronger communication and coalition building around this issue, such as the conferences and communications of the Northern and Southern Sierra Prescribed Fire Councils, which is focused on increasing the pace and scale of managed fire and landscape scale prescribed fire (December 2-3, McClellan, CA).
- Maximize stakeholder involvement to include the critical players beyond just the Sierra Nevada (Air Resources Board, Health Advocacy Groups, etc.). This may include highly collaborative prescribed burns such as the Boulder Burn (executed) and Caples Burn (planned).
- Use best available data of recent large fires to educate decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels on the benefits of using controlled fire versus the inescapable alternative of uncontrolled wildfire, including engaging USFS leadership from USFS Region 5 in delivering this message. This outreach should include engaging CARB, Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Forest Service leadership more effectively and developing strong messaging that stakeholders must “Pick Your Smoke” given the realities of life in a fire prone environment and the potential for increased fire size and intensity if we don’t take immediate action. Key messages include:
 - The consequences of uncontrolled wildfires are far more detrimental than fire used as a management tool;
 - Use of prescribed fire is also cost effective: per acre prescribed fire is the lowest cost treatment, mechanical often two to four times more, and wildfire six to 15 times more, and likely to increase;
 - As fuel loads increase, rural home construction expands, and budgets decline, delays in implementation will only make it more difficult to expand the use of managed fire; and
 - Without proactively addressing some of these conditions, the status quo will relegate many ecologically important areas (including sensitive species habitat) to continued degradation from either no fire or wildfire burning at high-intensity.
- Identify policies and statute relating to potential liability from unintended consequences of controlled fire.

ISSUE 3: Increased treatment of steep slope areas of the forest: Increasing awareness of and access to technology and equipment to allow greater access to steep slope mechanical treatments on public lands, including removing policy level impediments. A significant portion of USFS lands are currently not available for mechanical treatment given restrictions on areas with steeper slopes. Today’s equipment has the potential of operating on some of these slopes without adverse ecological impacts.

Key Actions (will be expanded further as Plan is developed):

- Conduct a series of field trip demonstrations of some of the equipment USFS may want to utilize in Steep Slope Areas (several field trips have already been completed with favorable results under a variety of conditions).

- Work closely with USFS staff to ensure that language regarding steep slopes in early adopters' forest plan revisions is open enough to enable those forests to try some new and different approaches in steep slope areas (this is already underway). However, other forests with more restrictive plan language are required to develop site specific amendments to do the same. It is critical that USFS staff understand enough about this opportunity to feel comfortable utilizing it, therefore consistent training and direction should be provided to forests in this area.
- Because the Plumas National Forest has already developed a site specific amendment for steep slopes work in one of their NEPA-completed projects, utilize this project as a detailed demonstration project to widen our outreach in terms of results, as well as the process of creating the amendment that worked for them. This includes other Forests as well as more environmental groups, timber operators, and other interested parties.
- Utilize a large landscape demonstration project to move forward in increasing steep slope demonstration treatments, as well as utilizing the SNFCI Action Plan forest by forest research to also identify steep slopes implementation opportunities.

ISSUE 4: Keep economic benefit from restoration activities in the local community. Identify and utilize a wide range of USFS contracting options to help keep economic benefits of restoration projects on public lands within local communities. As wood and biomass processing infrastructure has sharply declined, many communities face severe and persistent socio-economic challenges. Despite the USFS's expressed desire to keep economic benefits in local communities and a number of innovative collaborations underway throughout the Sierra Nevada, it has proven very difficult to achieve this objective.

Key Actions (will be expanded further as Plan is developed):

- Continue the work of the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council, USFS Region 5, and Sierra Cascades All Lands Enhancement group (SCALE) to develop a toolkit that will help forest supervisors and collaboratives throughout the Region give greater weight to local socioeconomic benefit when awarding contracts.
- Continue efforts with USFS forests where local preference is being appropriately weighted in the bidding process and assess effectiveness of this approach.
- Establish this as a key objective for USFS forests, with support and assistance from Region 5 staff to make the paradigm shift that will be required to overcome institutional barriers.

ISSUE 5: Promote large landscape treatments. In order to even start to approach the pace and scale of restoration needed to restore resilience in our forests, it is imperative that we develop and implement one or more large landscape pilot projects, on the order of a watershed or ranger district that embodies adaptive management. These projects should include opportunities to address the four issue areas described above, as well as promote economically healthy and fire safe communities; promote forest resilience and reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire; assess ecological impacts with a strong

research component; and capture and transmit lessons learned to effectively increase pace and scale. This project should include but not be limited to:

- Include an active and formal partnership between the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council and the USFS that promotes collaboration in the development of critical pieces of a land landscape management demonstration project including, but not limited to, funding, monitoring, and project design.
- Conduct research to measure the impacts of fuel treatments on water quality, quantity, and timing of flow (in paired watersheds if possible); carbon storage and GHG emissions; and assessment of effects of treatments on vegetation and wildlife.
- Identify and test ways to improve the efficiency of environmental regulatory compliance process, such as NEPA, CEQA, and ESA, as a way to increase pace and scale. This should include ensuring that future NEPA also includes CEQA or meets CEQA requirements.
- Ensure that additional resources are made available for the project; it should not be conducted in lieu of other needed activities on the Forest. Dedicated funding and staffing must be identified.

Conclusion

Failure to understand the urgency of the situation in the Sierra Nevada will have devastating impacts on California's environment and economy. The impacts will include reducing California's water supply reliability, impairing the State's efforts to reduce GHG emissions, increasing particulate matter air pollutions, destroying crucial habitat, and negatively impacting recreational activities and local economies. The foundation for such an effort exists, but the strong policy and investment actions identified in this document must be taken by federal and state government.

This SNFCI Action Plan is built upon and will enhance existing efforts both at a Regional and watershed level. The SNC will provide leadership and focus, and engage interested parties who share our vision and commitment to restoring our forest to health and resiliency.

This report provides a framework through which these issues can be addressed. It will require a renewed commitment at the state, federal and local levels. The alternative of the status quo is simply not acceptable.

Agenda Item XI Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan Update

Presented by:

Executive Officer, Jim Branham

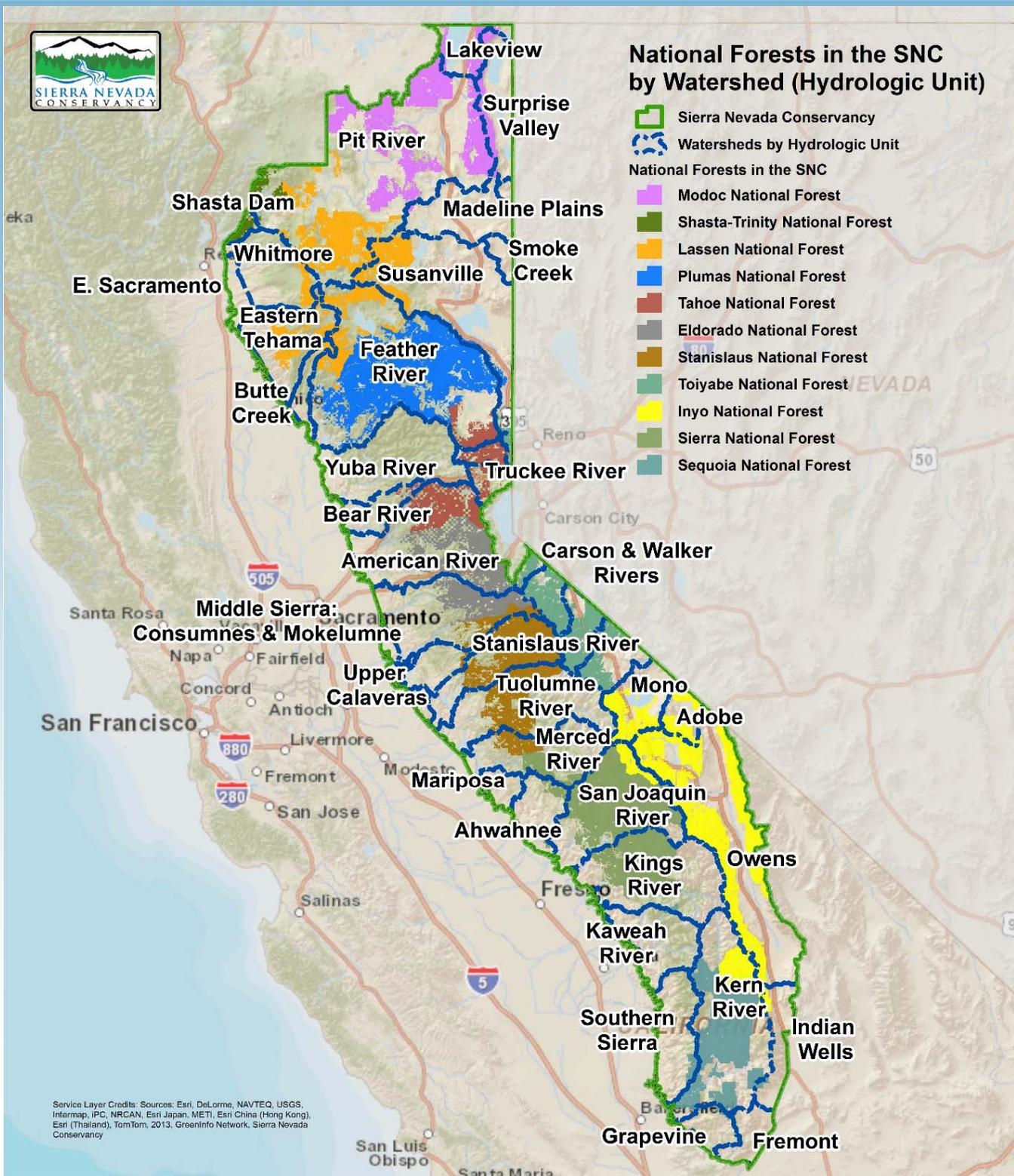
and

Mt. Whitney Area Representative, Mandy Vance



National Forests in the SNC by Watershed (Hydrologic Unit)

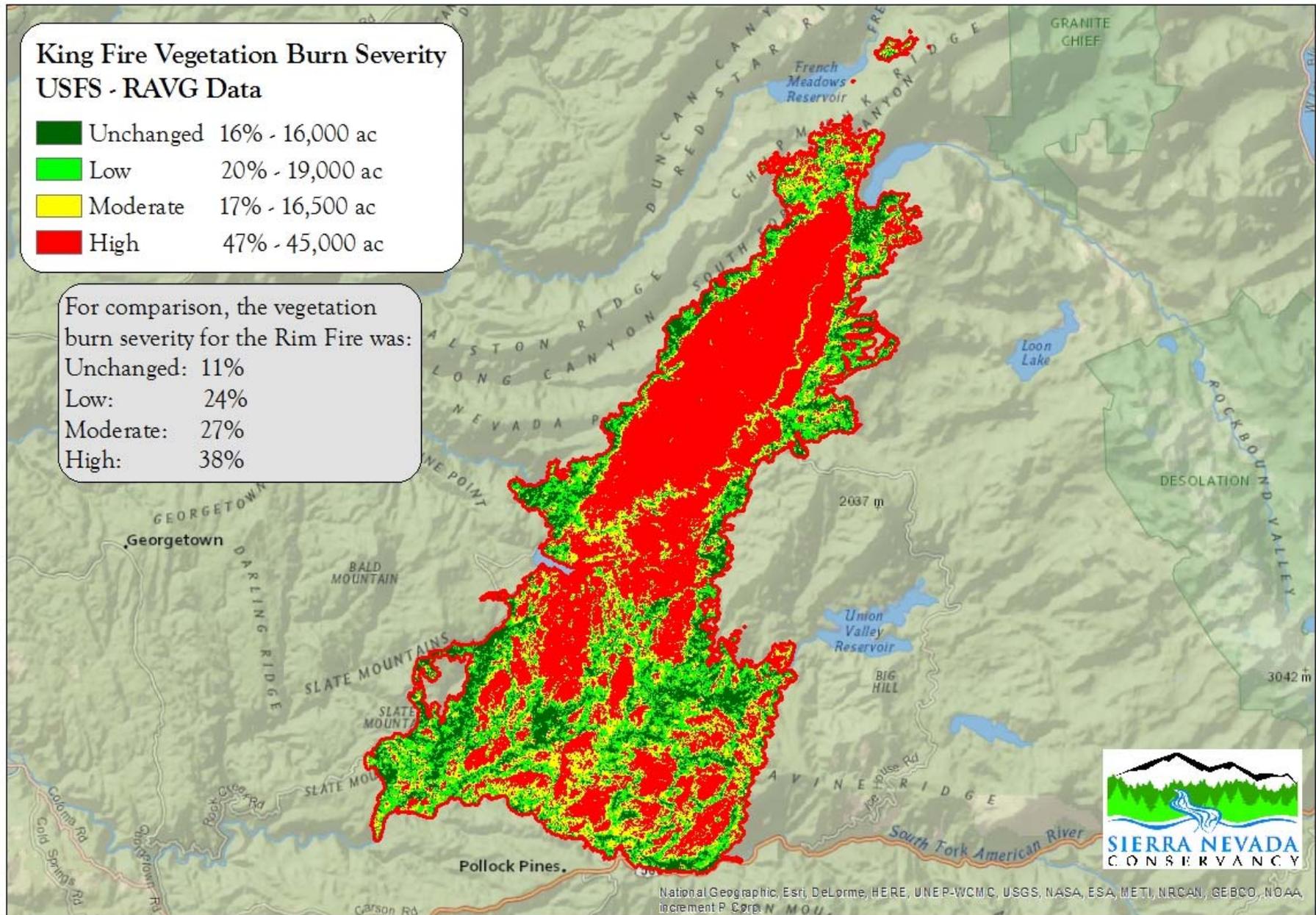
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Watersheds by Hydrologic Unit
- National Forests in the SNC**
- Modoc National Forest
- Shasta-Trinity National Forest
- Lassen National Forest
- Plumas National Forest
- Tahoe National Forest
- Eldorado National Forest
- Stanislaus National Forest
- Toiyabe National Forest
- Inyo National Forest
- Sierra National Forest
- Sequoia National Forest



Forests by Watershed

Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Informap, IPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013, GreenInfo Network, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

King Fire Vegetation Severity



Carbon Storage

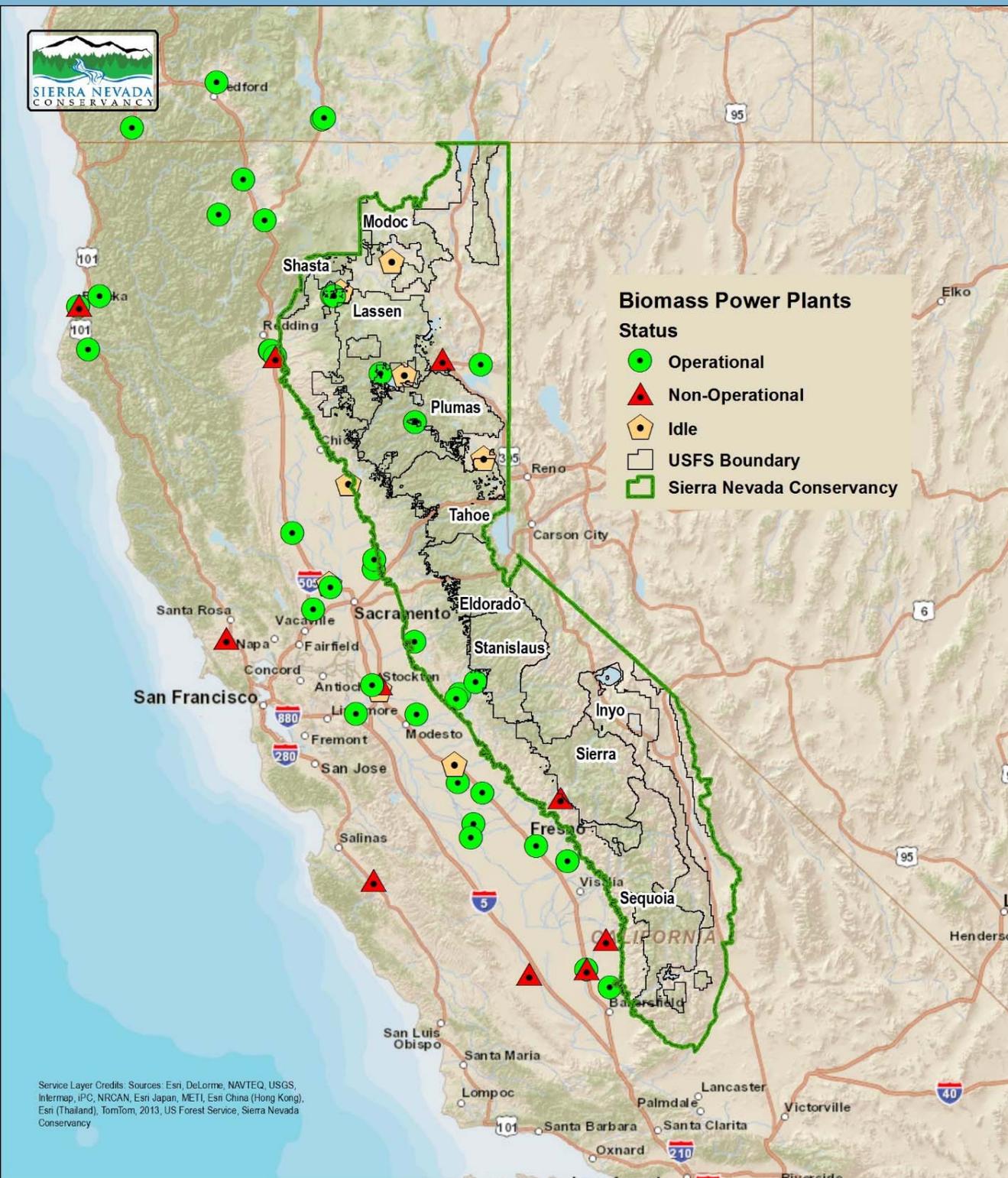


Service Layer Credits: US Forest Service, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Wood Processing Infrastructure

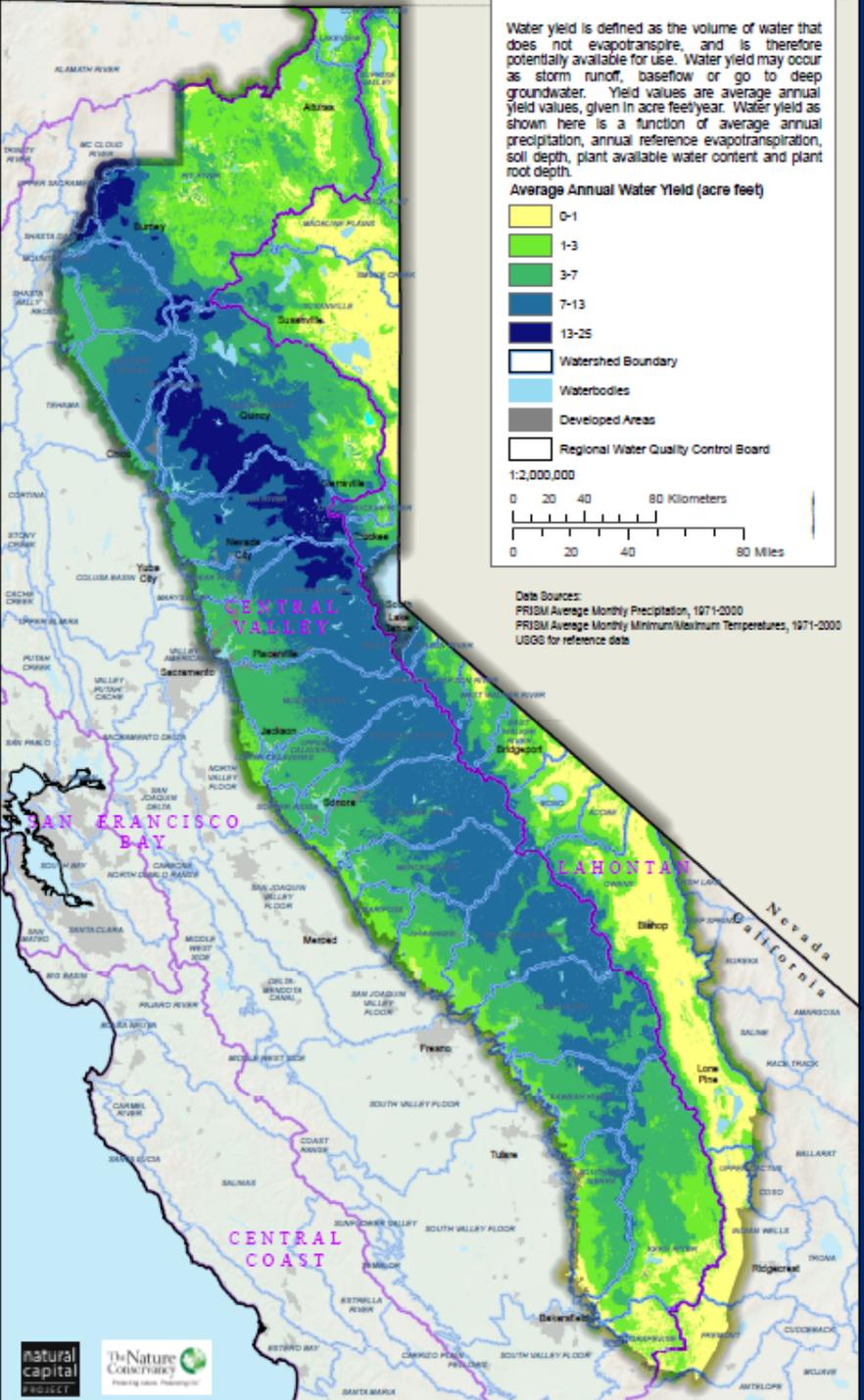


Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, iPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013, US Forest Service, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

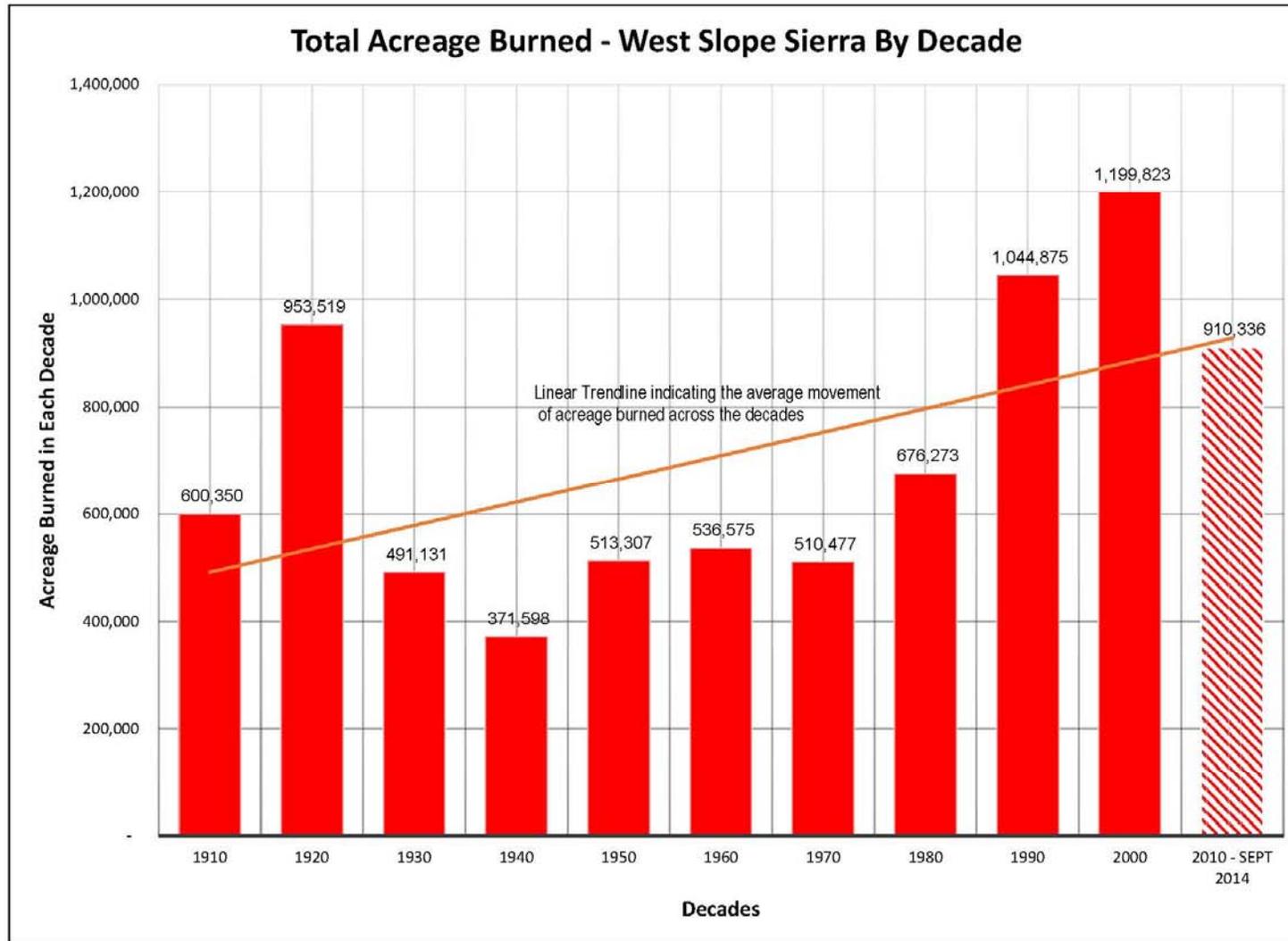


Biomass Processing Infrastructure

Water Yield



West Slope Fire Activity Over Time



Background

In June 2013, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board (Board) approved Grant Guidelines for the 2013-14 Grant Round. This will be the SNC's final grant round using funding from Proposition 84, The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006. Staff released public notification of the SNC 2013-14 Grant Round on June 27, 2013. Estimated funding available for this grant round is approximately \$2.9 million.

This grant round has no final application due date. Projects that have provided a complete grant application and that receive a minimum score of 85 out of 100 may be presented to the Board for approval.

At the December 2013 Board meeting, the Board authorized one (1) grant in the amount of \$250,000. At the March 2014 Board meeting, four (4) projects totaling \$1.2 million were authorized. At the June 2014 meeting, two (2) projects totaling \$143,590 were authorized. At the September 2014 meeting, six (6) projects totaling \$963,276 were authorized. For the December 2014 meeting, three (3) projects totaling \$530,853 are being recommended to the Board for approval. Barring any return of significant funds from awarded grants, this completes the 2013-14 Grant Round (this does not include the \$1 million allocated for the Rim Fire Restoration effort).

Current Status

Staff has completed review of the following three (3) projects and found they meet or exceed the threshold scoring level of 85 points:

Abandoned Mine Lands Remediation (one project totaling \$176,853)

- [Project #809](#), Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project

Healthy Forests (two projects totaling \$354,000)

- [Project #811](#), Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project
- [Project #812](#), Mono County Thermal Biomass Project

Staff is recommending Board approval of these three (3) projects totaling \$530,853. Project specific information including project descriptions, maps and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation is provided in the attached Exhibit A to this item.

Attachments:

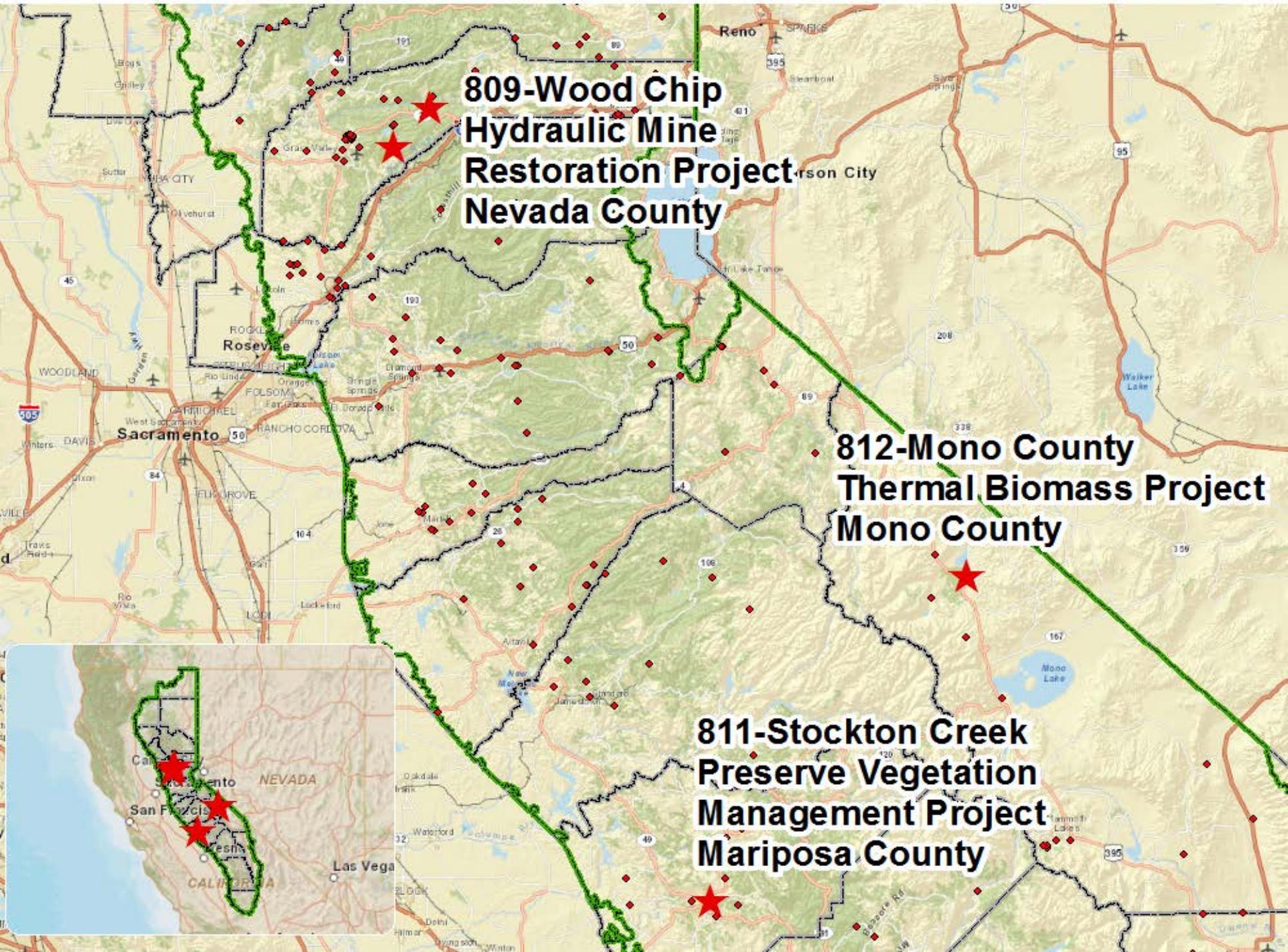
Exhibit A, Project Descriptions, Maps and CEQA Documentation

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project (SNC 809) and ; and the Mono County Thermal Biomass Project (SNC 812); (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project (SNC 811) with mitigation measures may have a

significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration with mitigation measures and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for this project; and (c) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects.

Project Name	SNC Project #	Requested Amount
Abandoned Mine Lands Remediation		
Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project	809	\$176,853
Healthy Forests		
Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project	811	\$139,000
Mono County Thermal Biomass Project	812	\$215,000



**809-Wood Chip
Hydraulic Mine
Restoration Project
Nevada County**

This map shows the locations of three environmental projects in Northern California. The 809-Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project is located in Nevada County, marked with two red stars. The 812-Mono County Thermal Biomass Project is located in Mono County, marked with one red star. The 811-Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project is located in Mariposa County, marked with one red star. Numerous red diamonds are scattered across the map, representing other sites. Major cities like Sacramento, Roseville, and Reno are labeled. An inset map in the bottom left shows the state of California with red stars indicating the project locations in the northern region.

**812-Mono County
Thermal Biomass Project
Mono County**

**811-Stockton Creek
Preserve Vegetation
Management Project
Mariposa County**

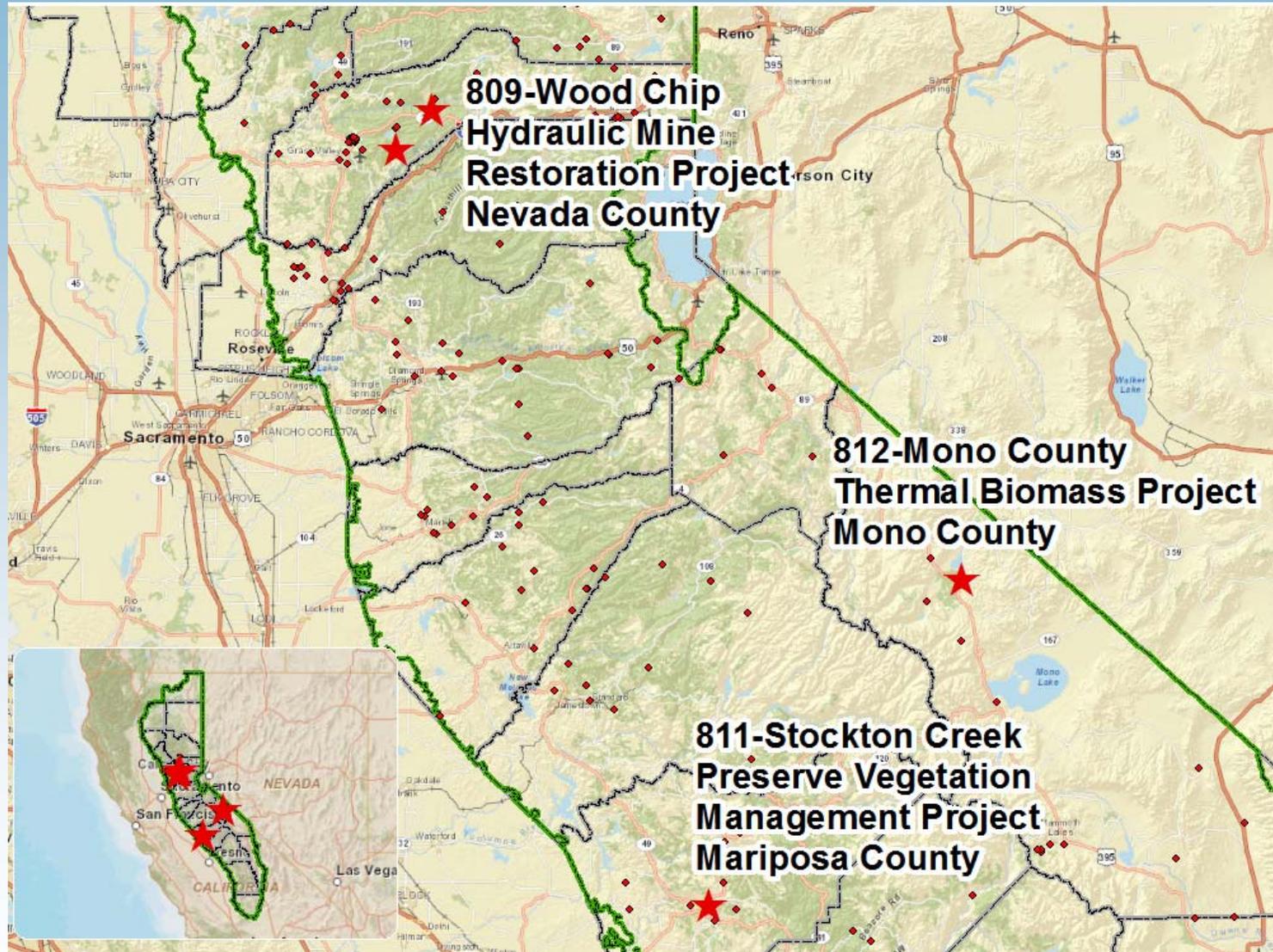
Agenda Item XII

Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Awards

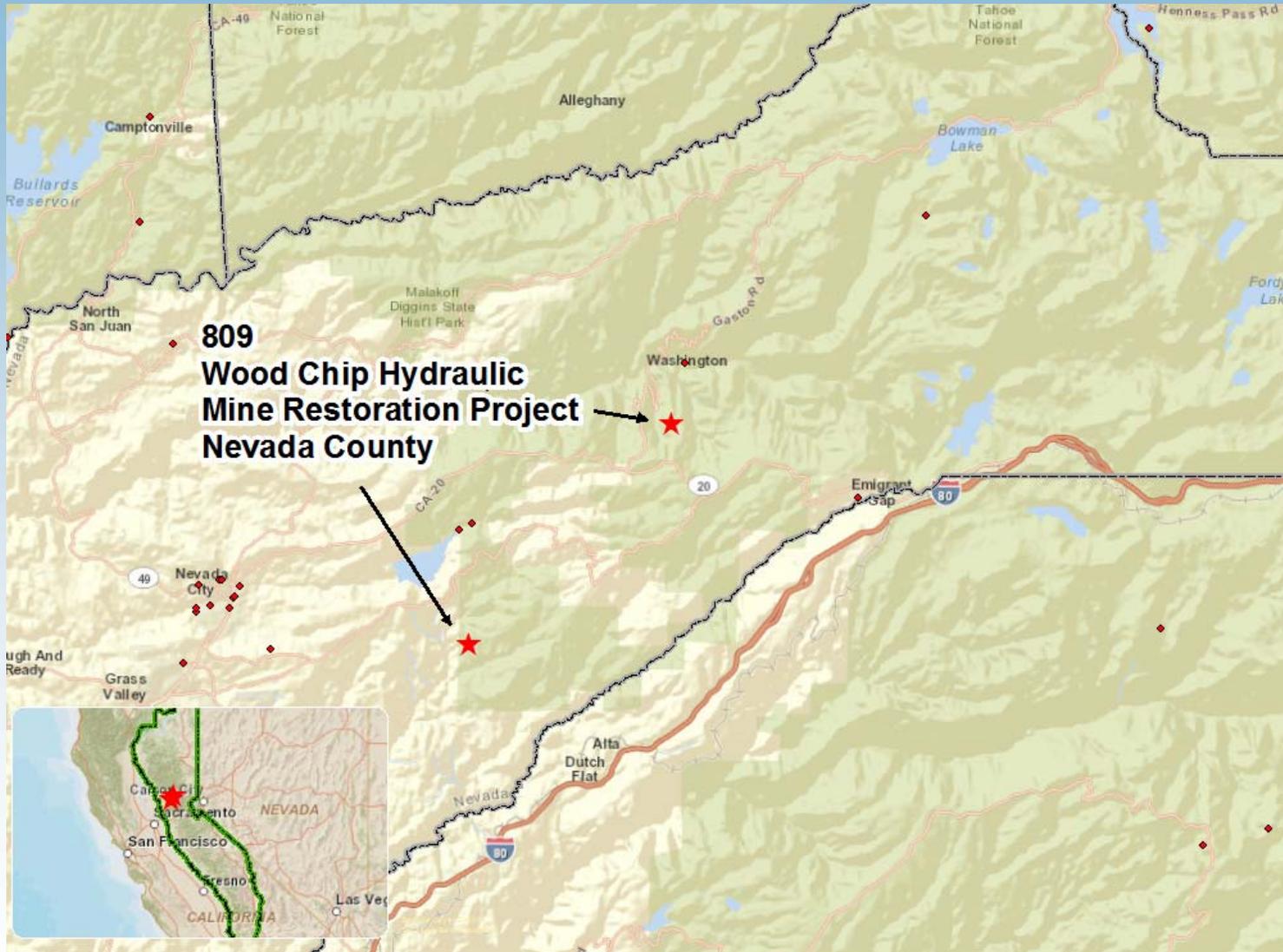
Presented by:

Mt. Whitney Area Manager, Julie Bear
and
Mt. Lassen Area Manager, Bob Kingman

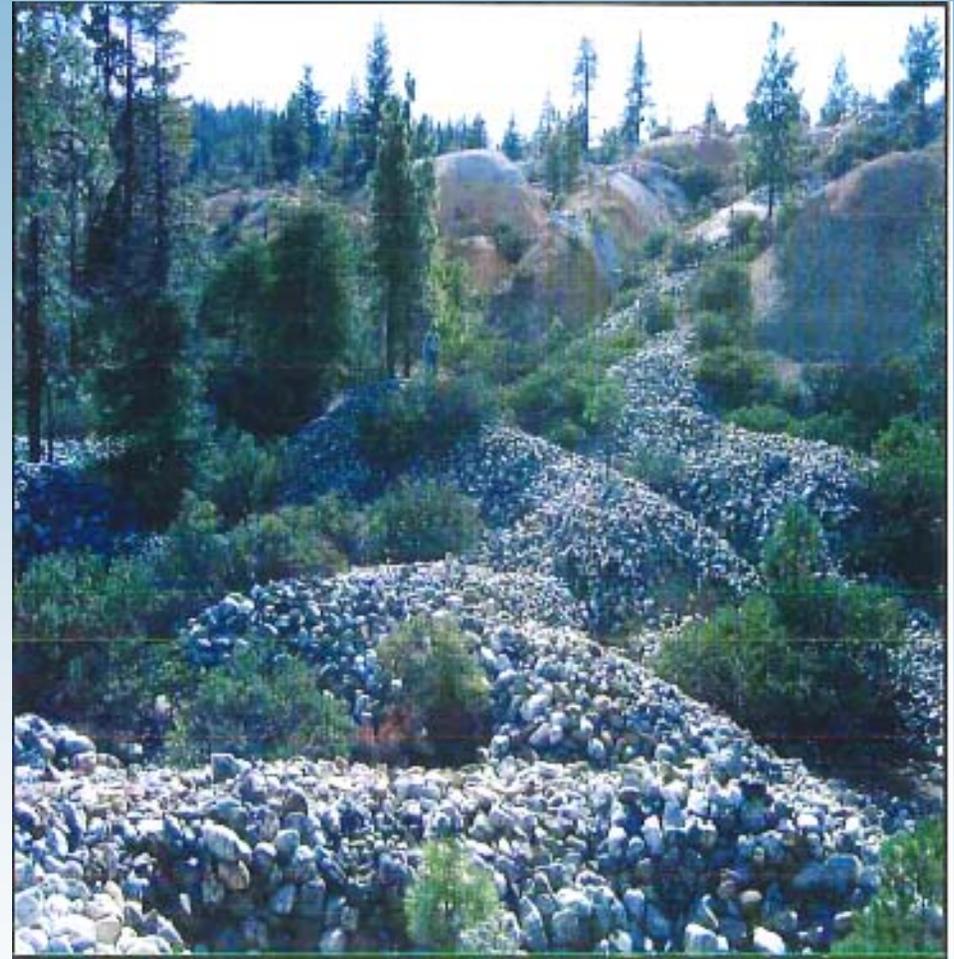
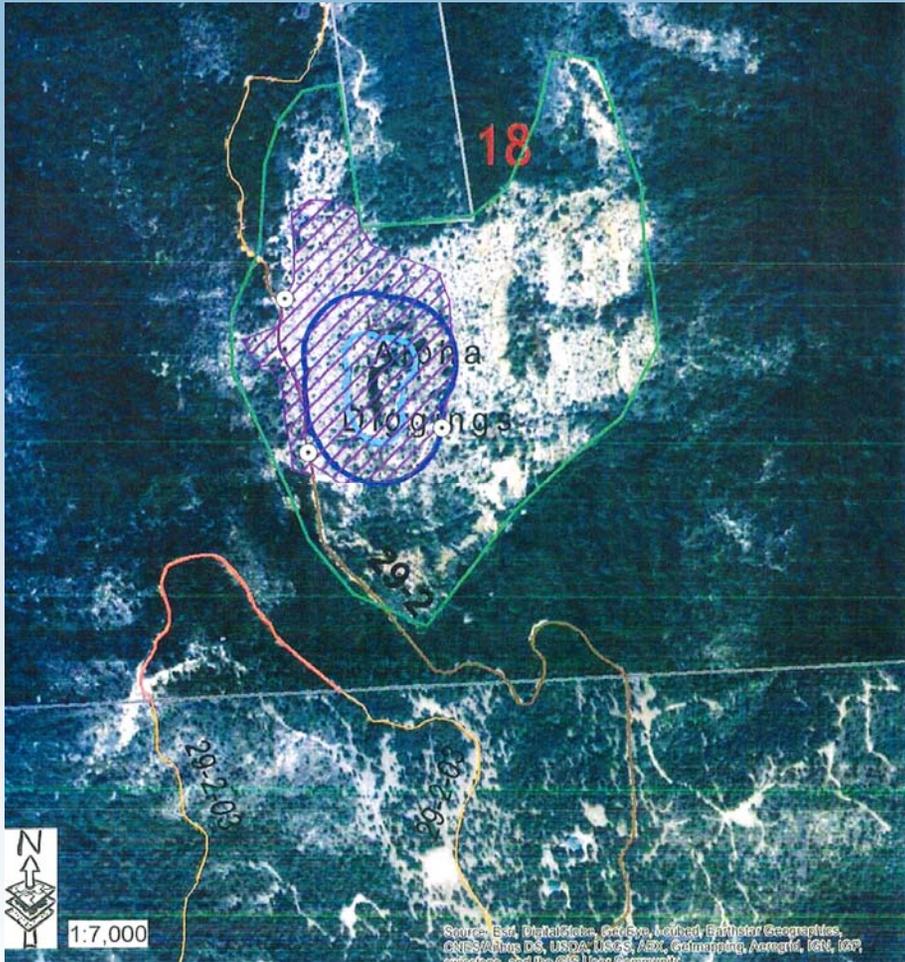
Proposed Grant Project Locations



Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project Location Map

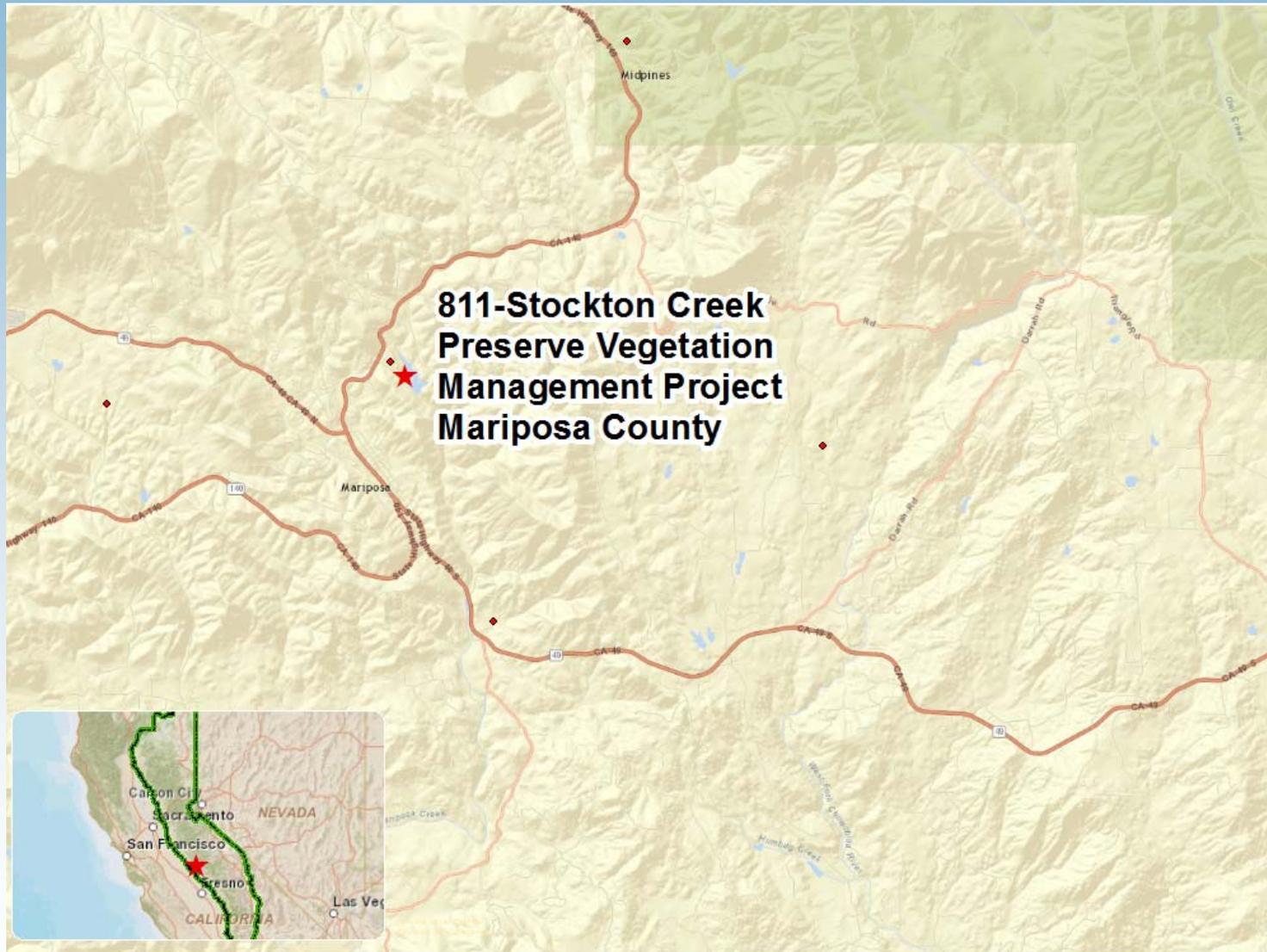


Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project



Aerial and surface views of ground disturbance at Alpha Diggins Mine site

Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project Location Map



Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project

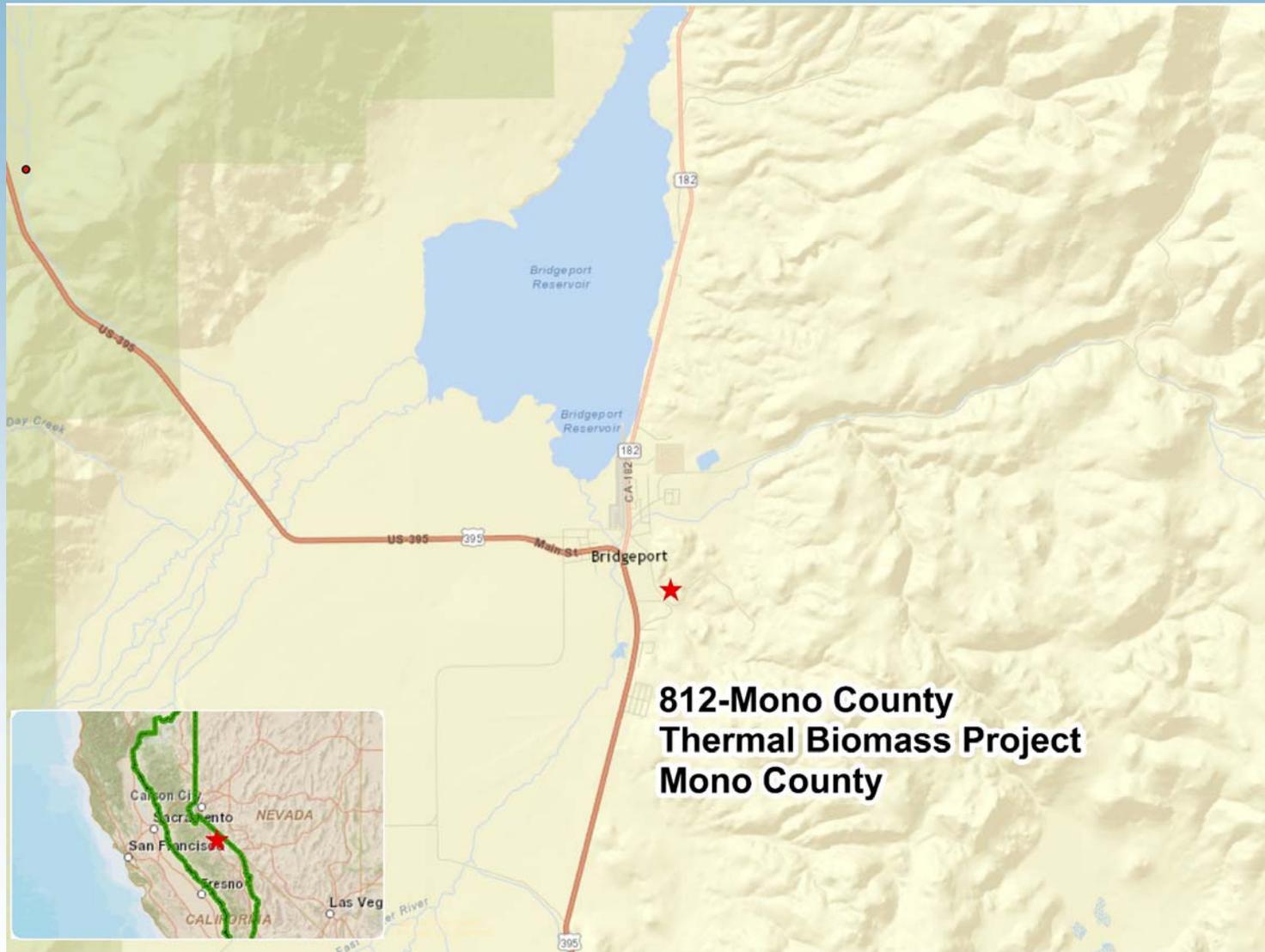


View of phase one mastication



Stockton Creek Reservoir

Mono County Thermal Biomass Project Location Map



Mono County Thermal Biomass Project



Boiler to be replaced

Mono County Public Works
Facilities Building & Boiler
Location



Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Wood Chip Hydraulic Mine Restoration Project (SNC 809) and ; and the Mono County Thermal Biomass Project (SNC 812); (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Stockton Creek Preserve Vegetation Management Project (SNC 811) with mitigation measures may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration with mitigation measures and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for this project; and (c) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects.

Background

With the passage of Proposition 1, [Funding for Water Quality, Supply, Treatment, and Storage Projects Water Bond](#), an allocation of \$25 million is provided for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). The language in the Proposition provides that the funds be used for “competitive grants for multi-benefit ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects in accordance with statewide priorities.” Obviously these type of projects are consistent with SNC’s efforts under Proposition 84 and provide a perfect fit for our current efforts to improve Sierra watersheds. Proposition 1 also identifies a number of appropriate uses for these funds under the Chapter allocating funds to the SNC, many of which are consistent with projects the SNC has funded in the past (see Attachment A).

Current Status

The SNC is awaiting final word on whether funding for this program will be proposed in the 2015-16 State Budget, approval of which would make funds available on July 1, 2015. Anticipating this possibility, SNC staff is working with the Natural Resources Agency and the Department of Finance to provide requested information. Staff has proposed a plan of three appropriations over the next five years. Initial planning anticipates appropriations of approximately \$10 million (2015-16), \$7 million (2017-18) and \$6 million (2019-20), accounting for the estimated \$23 million that will be available for grant awards. SNC also anticipates the 5% administration funding will be made available to assist SNC in implementation of the grant program.

Significant funding in Proposition 1 is available to a variety of state agencies, as well as other funding sources, to address many of the issues in which the SNC has previously invested grants funds. For example, the Department of Fish and Wildlife has \$285 million available for watershed restoration outside of the Delta, as well as \$ 25 million in Cap and Trade Auction Revenue for wetland and mountain meadow restoration. CalFire is currently implementing their \$42 million Cap and Trade funding program, as well as the State Responsibility Fees grant program, primarily focused on private lands. The Department of Water Resources also is allocated and additional \$810 million for funding of projects identified through the Integrated Regional Water Management Program, \$13 million of which will be expended in the Mountain County Overlay area. Potential funding for Abandoned Mine Land restoration exists in a number of sections of the Bond. The SNC plans on working closely with other state agencies and potential grantees to maximize investment in the Sierra Nevada from these and other funds.

Given this situation, and given the limited amount of funding available to the SNC, staff is recommending that the initial year of Proposition 1 grant funding be targeted on projects addressing forest health, consistent with the Board’s previous direction identifying this issue as the organization’s top priority. As the SNC moves forward with the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program, high priority projects will be identified and will likely be strong candidates for grant funding.

This direction is clearly consistent with the provisions Chapter 6 of Proposition 1 (Attachment A), which includes, among others, the following allowable uses for funds:

- ✓ *Implement fuel treatment projects to reduce wildfire risks, protect watersheds tributary to water storage facilities, and promote watershed health.*
- ✓ *Protect and restore rural and urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, protection of life and property, stormwater resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction.*
- ✓ *Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California's communities and ecosystems.*

Proposition 1 also includes a couple of provisions that guide development of guidelines that are different than the requirements of Proposition 84:

- ✓ Each Agency receiving funding shall hold three public meetings to solicit input, one each in Northern, Central and Southern California. As you may recall, the SNC has regularly used public workshops in the development of our Proposition 84 Guidelines and will schedule these workshops in our Region to meet this requirement and solicit public input.
- ✓ Guidelines must be approved by the Secretary for Natural Resources and provided to the legislature. We anticipate working closely with the Natural Resources Agency as we develop the guidelines and welcome their engagement, advice and approval.

The SNC will also consider the California Water Action Plan, the 2014 California Water Plan, Safeguarding California, the California Bioenergy Action Plan and other relevant guidance in the development of the Guidelines.

Next Steps

Following direction from the Board regarding this approach, staff will pursue the following proposed schedule for Guideline development:

- DRAFT Grant Guidelines Released for Public Comment – February 2, 2015
- Submit Grant Guidelines to Natural Resources Agency – February 5, 2015
- DRAFT Grant Guidelines to SNC Board – March 5, 2015
- Revisions made at Board meeting Released – March 12, 2015
- Three (3) Public Meetings – March 16 – 27
- Deadline for Receiving Public Comments – March 27, 2015
- Submission of Grant Guidelines to Natural Resources Agency – April 1, 2015
- Grant Guidelines Finalized in Preparation for the SNC Board Meeting – May 5, 2015
- SNC Board Meeting – FINAL Grant Guidelines – June 4, 2015
- Submission of ADOPTED Grant Guidelines to CA Legislature – June 10, 2015

Staff will coordinate Guideline development with the Natural Resources Agency, as well as other state agencies with funding consistent with the SNC's statutory programs.

Recommendation

Staff is recommending that the Board approve the proposed focus and plan for development of Proposition 1 Guidelines.

CHAPTER 6. Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams, Coastal Waters, and Watersheds

79730. The sum of one billion four hundred ninety-five million dollars (\$1,495,000,000) shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature from the fund, in accordance with this chapter, for competitive grants for multibenefit ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects in accordance with statewide priorities.

79731. Of the funds authorized by Section 79730, the sum of three hundred twenty-seven million five hundred thousand dollars (\$327,500,000) shall be allocated for multibenefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state in accordance with the following schedule:

- (a) Baldwin Hills Conservancy, ten million dollars (\$10,000,000).
- (b) California Tahoe Conservancy, fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000).
- (c) Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, ten million dollars (\$10,000,000).
- (d) Ocean Protection Council, thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000).
- (e) San Diego River Conservancy, seventeen million dollars (\$17,000,000).
- (f) San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000).
- (g) San Joaquin River Conservancy, ten million dollars (\$10,000,000).
- (h) Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000).
- (i) Sierra Nevada Conservancy, twenty-five million dollars (\$25,000,000).
- (j) State Coastal Conservancy, one hundred million five hundred thousand dollars (\$100,500,000). Eligible watersheds for the funds allocated pursuant to this subdivision include, but are not limited to, those that are in the San Francisco Bay Conservancy region, the Santa Ana River watershed, the Tijuana River watershed, the Otay River watershed, Catalina Island, and the central coast region.
- (k) Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy, fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000).

79732. (a) In protecting and restoring California rivers, lakes, streams, and watersheds, the purposes of this chapter are to:

- (1) Protect and increase the economic benefits arising from healthy watersheds, fishery resources, and instream flow.
- (2) Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California's communities and ecosystems.
- (3) Restore river parkways throughout the state, including, but not limited to, projects pursuant to the California River Parkways Act of 2004 (Chapter 3.8 (commencing with

Section 5750) of Division 5 of the Public Resources Code), in the Urban Streams Restoration Program established pursuant to Section 7048, and urban river greenways.

- (4) Protect and restore aquatic, wetland, and migratory bird ecosystems, including fish and wildlife corridors and the acquisition of water rights for instream flow.
- (5) Fulfill the obligations of the State of California in complying with the terms of multiparty settlement agreements related to water resources.
- (6) Remove barriers to fish passage.
- (7) Collaborate with federal agencies in the protection of fish native to California and wetlands in the central valley of California.
- (8) Implement fuel treatment projects to reduce wildfire risks, protect watersheds tributary to water storage facilities, and promote watershed health.
- (9) Protect and restore rural and urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, protection of life and property, stormwater resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction.
- (10) Protect and restore coastal watersheds, including, but not limited to, bays, marine estuaries, and nearshore ecosystems.
- (11) Reduce pollution or contamination of rivers, lakes, streams, or coastal waters, prevent and remediate mercury contamination from legacy mines, and protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management.
- (12) Assist in the recovery of endangered, threatened, or migratory species by improving watershed health, instream flows, fish passage, coastal or inland wetland restoration, or other means, such as natural community conservation plan and habitat conservation plan implementation.
- (13) Assist in water-related agricultural sustainability projects.

(b) Funds provided by this chapter shall only be used for projects that will provide fisheries or ecosystem benefits or improvements that are greater than required applicable environmental mitigation measures or compliance obligations.

79733. Of the funds made available by Section 79730, the sum of two hundred million dollars (\$200,000,000) shall be administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board for projects that result in enhanced stream flows.

79734. For restoration and ecosystem protection projects under this chapter, the services of the California Conservation Corps or a local conservation corps certified by the California Conservation Corps shall be used whenever feasible.

79735. (a) Of the funds authorized by Section 79730, one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for projects to protect and enhance an urban creek, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 7048, and its tributaries, pursuant to Division 22.8 (commencing with Section 32600) of, and Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of, the Public Resources Code and Section 79508.

(b) (1) Of the funds authorized by Section 79730, twenty million dollars (\$20,000,000) shall be made available to the secretary for a competitive program to fund multibenefit watershed and urban rivers enhancement projects in urban watersheds that increase regional and local water self-sufficiency and that meet at least two of the following objectives:

(A) Promote groundwater recharge and water reuse.

(B) Reduce energy consumption.

(C) Use soils, plants, and natural processes to treat runoff.

(D) Create or restore native habitat.

(E) Increase regional and local resiliency and adaptability to climate change.

(2) The program under this subdivision shall be implemented by state conservancies, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the state board, or other entities whose jurisdiction includes urban watersheds, as designated by the secretary. Projects funded under the program shall be a part of a plan developed jointly by the conservancies, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the state board, or other designated entities in consultation with the secretary.

(c) At least 25 percent of the funds available pursuant to this section shall be allocated for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities.

(d) Up to 10 percent of the funds available pursuant to this section may be allocated for project planning.

79736. Of the funds authorized by Section 79730, four hundred seventy-five million dollars (\$475,000,000) shall be available to the Natural Resources Agency to support projects that fulfill the obligations of the State of California in complying with the terms of any of the following:

(a) Subsection (d) of Section 3406 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (Title 34 of Public Law 102-575).

(b) Interstate compacts set forth in Section 66801 of the Government Code pursuant to Title 7.42 (commencing with Section 66905) of the Government Code.

(c) Intrastate or multiparty water quantification settlement agreement provisions, including ecosystem restoration projects, as set forth in Chapters 611, 612, 613, and 614 of the Statutes of 2003.

(d) The settlement agreement referenced in Section 2080.2 of the Fish and Game Code.

(e) Any intrastate or multiparty settlement agreement related to water acted upon or before December 31, 2013. Priority shall be given to projects that meet one or more of the following criteria:

(1) The project is of statewide significance.

(2) The project restores natural aquatic or riparian functions, or wetlands habitat for birds and aquatic species.

(3) The project protects or promotes the restoration of endangered or threatened species.

(4) The project enhances the reliability of water supplies on a regional or interregional basis.

(5) The project provides significant regional or statewide economic benefits.

79737. (a) Of the funds authorized by Section 79730, two hundred eighty-five million dollars (\$285,000,000) shall be available to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for watershed restoration projects statewide in accordance with this chapter.

(b) For the purposes of this section, watershed restoration includes activities to fund coastal wetland habitat, improve forest health, restore mountain meadows, modernize stream crossings, culverts, and bridges, reconnect historical flood plains, install or improve fish screens, provide fish passages, restore river channels, restore or enhance riparian, aquatic, and terrestrial habitat, improve ecological functions, acquire from willing sellers conservation easements for riparian buffer strips, improve local watershed management, and remove sediment or trash.

(c) For any funds available pursuant to this section that are used to provide grants under the Fisheries Restoration Grant Program, a priority shall be given to coastal waters.

(d) In allocating funds for projects pursuant to this section, the Department of Fish and Wildlife shall only make funds available for water quality, river, and watershed protection and restoration projects of statewide importance outside of the Delta.

(e) Funds provided by this section shall not be expended to pay the costs of the design, construction, operation, mitigation, or maintenance of Delta conveyance facilities.

(f) Funds provided by this section shall only be used for projects that will provide fisheries or ecosystem benefits or improvements that are greater than required applicable environmental mitigation measures or compliance obligations, except for any water transfers for the benefit of subsection (d) of Section 3406 of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (Title 34 of Public Law 102-575).

79738. (a) Of the funds authorized by Section 79730, eighty-seven million five hundred thousand dollars (\$87,500,000) shall be available to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for water quality, ecosystem restoration, and fish protection facilities that benefit the Delta, including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Projects to improve water quality or that contribute to the improvement of water quality in the Delta, including projects in Delta counties that provide multiple public benefits and improve drinking and agricultural water quality or water supplies.

(2) Habitat restoration, conservation, and enhancement projects to improve the condition of special status, at risk, endangered, or threatened species in the Delta and the Delta counties, including projects to eradicate invasive species, and projects that support the beneficial reuse of dredged material for habitat restoration and levee improvements.

(3) Scientific studies and assessments that support the Delta Science Program, as described in Section 85280, or projects under this section.

(b) In implementing this section, the department shall coordinate and consult with the Delta city or Delta county in which a grant is proposed to be expended or an interest in real property is proposed to be acquired.

(c) Acquisitions pursuant to this section shall be from willing sellers only.

(d) In implementing this section state agencies shall prioritize wildlife conservation objectives through projects on public lands or voluntary projects on private lands, to the extent feasible.

(e) Funds available pursuant to this section shall not be used to acquire land via eminent domain.

(f) Funds available pursuant to this section shall not be expended to pay the costs of the design, construction, operation, mitigation, or maintenance of Delta conveyance facilities.

Background

Each year the Board approves an annual Action Plan that outlines the specific activities the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) will undertake during the upcoming fiscal year in support of the strategies in the SNC's Strategic Plan. The Board adopted the 2014-15 Action Plan at the June 2014 meeting. At that same meeting, the Board directed staff to re-focus and increase efforts related to healthy forests in recognition of the dire conditions in many of the forests in the Sierra Nevada and the urgent need for action. Per that direction, staff have developed the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan for review and approval by the Board (see Agenda Item XI).

Current Status

Based on staff's analysis of anticipated workload related to increased efforts under SNFCI, it does not appear as if significant changes to the approved 2014-15 Action Plan are needed at this time. Staff will continue to evaluate needs and will make any adjustments needed to ensure that this effort remain the organization's top priority. The following two additional actions under SNFCI have been added to reflect the additional efforts being undertaken in response to the Board's direction:

- Developing a SNFCI Action Plan to guide the SNC's efforts in addressing the dire state of many forests in the Sierra Nevada. The plan will include actions to address regional issues and to facilitate collaborative processes for the identification of needs and priorities at the local level.
- Launching an effort to develop a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) in collaboration with other State, federal and local government entities, nonprofit and community organizations, and tribes. The purpose of the plan will be to address policy issues and coordinate investment in the Sierra Nevada to reduce risks to the many benefits the Region provides.

In addition, staff have re-evaluated actions related to other projects and initiatives in the 2014-15 Action Plan in light of the additional effort that will be required to develop the SNFCI Action Plan and the Sierra Nevada WIP, as well as any other new developments since the Plan was approved by the Board in June 2014. This has led to modifications to actions under several initiatives. In addition to some more minor revisions, these include:

- Noting completion of the awarding of funds under the 2013-14 Healthy Forests and Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Program. (This assumes the Board awards remaining funds to projects as recommended by staff under Agenda Item XII).
- Adding the development of guidelines, including the holding of public workshops and submission to the California Natural Resources Agency, for the 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant round.
- Deleting an action related to developing and implementing a funding program to promote biomass utilization using Cap and Trade Auction Revenues since the SNC will not be receiving funding from this source in the current year.

- Putting additional emphasis under the Education and Communications Initiative on the dire condition of many of our forests and the significant risk to the Region's role in storing carbon, providing water and other benefits to Californians.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to implement the 2014-15 Action Plan during the remainder of this fiscal year. And as indicated above, will consider additional changes to the Plan if needed to accommodate any unanticipated workloads associated with the development of the SNFCI Action Plan and Sierra Nevada WIP. Staff will report any such changes to the Board at future meetings.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board approve the revisions to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2014-15 Action Plan after reviewing and providing any modifications and/or comments.

2014-15

Draft Revised Action Plan



SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

Approved: June 2014
Proposed for Revision: December 2014

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The following represent the major initiatives and activities to be undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) between July 2014 and June 2015, consistent with the SNC's Strategic Plan (Plan). ~~Upon approval by the SNC Governing Board, staff will use this Plan to guide activities in the coming year. In the event that circumstances lead to other initiatives or activities being undertaken, staff will provide the Board with updated information at a subsequent Board meeting.~~ This Action Plan was originally approved by the SNC Governing Board in June 2014 and includes proposed revisions brought to the Board in December 2014.

Grant Program

The SNC Grant Program will complete the following actions through June 2015:

- Awarding all of the funds currently available under the 2013-14 grant round, which is focused on Healthy Forest, Biomass Utilization and Abandoned Mine Land Projects. (Completed)
- Implementing the Rim Fire Restoration grant focus area, funding \$1 million of high quality projects in the effected Region.
- Closing out 34 current grant projects (allocating returned funds to the 2013-14 grant round); completing all required reporting including SNC's Success Tracker and Performance Measures Database as well as State documentation.
- Providing timely and accurate response to any bond reporting and audit requests received. Updating the Agency Bond Consolidated Reporting System web site and the California Strategic Growth Plan Bond Accountability web site as required in Executive Order S-02-07.
- Develop guidelines, including the holding of public workshops and submission to the Natural Resources Agency, for the 2015-16 Proposition 1 grant round.
- ~~In the event that new grant funding is identified for the SNC, initiate the process to develop guidelines necessary to implement future grant funding cycles.~~

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

The SNC will continue to coordinate implementation of the SNFCI, working closely with a wide range of stakeholders and agencies. Specific actions to be accomplished under SNFCI have been organized into three tiers in terms of priority levels, 1 indicating highest priority and 3 indicating lowest priority. They include:

- Developing a Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Action Plan to guide the SNC's efforts in addressing the dire state of many forests in the Sierra Nevada. The plan will include actions to address regional issues and to facilitate collaborative processes for the identification of needs and priorities at the local level.
- Launching an effort to develop a Sierra Nevada Watershed ~~Health~~ Improvement Program in collaboration with other State, federal and local government entities, nonprofit and community organizations, and tribes. The purpose of the plan will be to address key policy issues and coordinate investment in the Sierra Nevada to reduce risks to the benefits the Region provides.
- Providing Proposition 84 grant funding for projects which meet SNC criteria for Healthy Forests funding under the 2013-14 grant round and Rim Fire Restoration grant focus. (Tier 1)

- Continuing to work with the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council and the US Forest Service in specific focus areas most likely to reduce barriers to increase pace and scale of ecological restoration in our forests. (Tier 1)
- Continuing to develop and support projects consistent with SNFCI objectives, with clear deliverables and quantifiable measures for success and a positive influence on increasing pace and scale of restoration. (Tier 2)
- Supporting forest and biomass collaboration efforts seeking long-term sustainability by assisting them in the search for capacity building funding through SNC partners and other opportunities. (Tier 2)
- Participating in various efforts to promote research, policy changes and investment in support of SNFCI objectives. (Tier 2)
- Monitoring various projects and efforts underway which may intersect with SNFCI, either through policy changes that may impact the initiative, or emerging needs which might be strong candidates for SNC support or technical assistance, as resources allow. (Tier 3)

Biomass Utilization

The SNC will continue to work with a broad range of community, agency, and industry stakeholders to find economic uses for the excess biomass removed in forest restoration activities. SNC is identified in the California 2012 Bioenergy Action Plan as the state agency responsible for pursuing funding for forest Bioenergy research and implementation and assisting communities with the development of community scale projects. To fulfill these goals and responsibilities SNC will take the following actions:

- Providing Proposition 84 grant funding for projects which meet SNC criteria for Biomass Utilization funding under the 2013-14 grant round (Completed) and 2015-16 round.
- Continuing to strategically provide technical assistance and funding support, as well as identify additional funding sources, for projects in various stages of development within the Region. Under the Bioenergy Action Plan, the SNC will provide a limited level of assistance to projects outside the Region.
- Continuing to work with other agencies (such as the US Forest Service, CalFire, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the California Energy Commission) to help craft policies and programs to assist forest biomass infrastructure development and retention.
- Continuing to provide outreach to help educate policy makers and the public on the issues associated with woody biomass utilization to help diverse interests resolve issues and concerns.
- Helping to compile information and develop tools that assist in identifying the most appropriate locations for biomass utilization facilities.
- ~~In the event that Cap and Trade Auction Revenue becomes available for biomass utilization purposes, assist in development and implementation of a funding program to promote biomass utilization infrastructure and encourage utilization.~~

Abandoned Mine Lands

The SNC, working with multiple government and non-government partners, will continue to assist in the identification and implementation of approaches for Abandoned Mine

Lands (AML) remediation that may be widely applied to improve the quality and reliability of the water and waterways and water storage facilities within and outside the Region. Specific actions will include:

- Continuing to identify and develop AML project proposals eligible for funding in the 2013-14 grant round until the funding allocations are fully spent. (Completed)
- Continuing to pursue the goal of a blanket due diligence process for properties that may be acquired using State funds.
- Facilitating increased collaboration among State agencies participating in AML remediation in the Sierra and other parts of the State by providing support to the California Abandoned Mine Lands Agency Group (CAMLAG) and helping to identify and fill gaps in research, data, and knowledge that could be addressed in order to facilitate a more collaborative approach.
- Continuing to work with partners to educate decision makers and others about legacy mining impacts; Sponsoring and/or partnering in AML symposia and other events.
- Continuing to explore various funding opportunities for AML cleanup.

Regional Agriculture and Ranching

The SNC will continue to participate and support partners' efforts and learn more about the needs of farmers and ranchers in the Sierra and how the SNC can help to address those needs. In addition, the SNC will continue to identify opportunities to increase the presence of the SNC and Sierra stakeholders in policy and funding discussions. Specific actions will include:

- Working closely with the Recreation and Tourism Initiative, support efforts to develop a Sierra Agritourism Network and increase the presence of agritourism on the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide website and companion materials.
- Continuing to participate in discussions, workshops and meetings to understand relevant issues, policies and actions and build relationships within the farming and ranching communities.
- Supporting partner efforts to engage and reach out to policy makers and legislators regarding the benefits of agriculture and ranching and include these messages in SNC outreach and communication efforts as appropriate.
- ~~Gaining a better understanding of policy and feasibility regarding agriculture biomass utilization.~~
- Working with partners to support their efforts, including potentially funding and implementing workshops addressing specific needs; utilize grant writer to find funds to support these efforts.
- Supporting and participating in on-going conversations regarding grazing on public lands.

Regional Tourism and Recreation

The SNC will focus on four primary elements to make substantial progress in promoting and developing regional tourism and recreation, including: 1) continuing support and growth of the Sierra Nevada Geotourism (SNGT) MapGuide Project, 2) assisting in the development of tourism and recreation attractions and products with regional significance, 3) promoting the development of programs and opportunities that

strengthen the Sierra Nevada "brand", and 4) building and maintaining recreation and tourism industry relationships. Specific actions will include:

- Soliciting and developing new content and destinations for display on the SNGT website, with an emphasis on agritourism, and under-represented regions.
- Implementing the first of a two-year distribution plan for half of 71,000 printed MapGuides (third printing).
- Implementing a marketing plan aimed at increasing downloads of mobile phone applications and the amount of web traffic visiting the SNGT site on a monthly basis.
- Assisting in the development of up to three water trail projects with local organizations, including seeking outside resources to support this effort. and assisting in the formation of a regional association to support local organizations interested in developing additional water trails.
- Continue ~~W~~working with state and local partners promoting existing agritourism opportunities, and supporting efforts to establish new agritourism opportunities by organizing a series of agritourism training workshops in targeted areas and linking agritourism projects in the Region to create and market a region wide network of agritourism products and experiences.
- Engaging with industry professionals and organizations to increase exposure of the Region and tourism issues in the Region.

Ecosystem Services

The SNC will work with partners to continue actions under this initiative which help to quantify environmental benefits in the upper watershed and initiate new investment strategies and identify new investors. The primary actions will be:

- Continuing to communicate the key findings of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis (MACA), to make the case that new and additional investment in fuel treatments is a cost savings measure and needed for long-term forest health.
- Working with project partners to evaluate new opportunities to implement actions based on the outcomes of the MACA.
- ~~Collaborating with the National Forest Foundation and other partners to entice individuals and organizations, particularly in the East Bay, to invest in the Mokelumne Watershed Fund.~~
- Coordinating with key partners including US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy and University of California Merced to identify and implement research and monitoring projects to better understand the relationship between forest management and water yield.
- Evaluating the initial findings and future potential of a previously funded project to quantify any potential water yield increase and change to the hydrograph that may result from meadow restoration activities. Work with US Geological Survey (USGS) and other partners to better understand the connection of forests, fires, and sediment on existing reservoirs within the state. Evaluate potential problem areas and begin to quantify the extent of the problem, if any.

Education and Communications

The SNC will continue to educate policy and decision-makers regarding the importance of the Sierra and the SNC to the state's long-term health and well-being. Outreach will focus on increasing awareness of the Sierra Nevada Region's important role in ensuring water quality and supply, storing carbon in our forests and the many other benefits that come from our Region. A key message for this effort will be the -as well as the dire condition of many forests in the Region and the urgent need for action. The overall goals of the Education and Communications program are to encourage key target audiences to support appropriate Sierra investment and sound policy that protects Sierra resources for the benefit of the entire State; establish secure funding for project work in the Region; and support the SNC as a critical funding delivery mechanism for the Region and the State. Actions will include:

- Elevating the profile of the SNC as an accepted, trusted resource for information regarding the link between upper watersheds, forest health, climate change, clean water, clean air, and sustainable communities through increased involvement and communications on such issues.
- Continuing relationship-building activities and conducting regular meetings with local/state/federal agencies, legislators and other decision-makers to ensure investment in the Region where more than 60 percent of the State's developed water supply originates.
- Utilizing events, newsletters, media stories, press releases, social media postings, the SNC Web site, interactive/story maps and other related activities to communicate the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the rest of the State.
- Tracking and analyzing current Sierra Nevada scientific research to inform the development of sound science-based policy that protects and restores the Sierra Nevada Region.
- Partnering with allies to complete Regional tours that demonstrate the value of SNC Initiatives and the importance of investment in watershed and forest health projects.
- Creating and distributing the fiscal year 2013-14 Annual Report.

Great Sierra River Cleanup

The SNC will coordinate the 6th Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup on September 20, 2014. In 2013, more than 4,200 volunteers joined together to remove nearly 39 tons of trash and recyclables from rivers throughout the Sierra Nevada. Specific actions will include:

- Continuing to work with existing river cleanups throughout the Sierra to unite and expand them.
- Recruiting organizations in areas with no river cleanup programs to host cleanups in their areas.

Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council

The SNC will continue to work with the Stewardship Council to implement a number of activities identified in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two organizations. In 2014-15, the SNC anticipates completing the following actions:

- Executing agreements to serve as covenant holder on lands donated to the US Forest Service (up to 10 properties).
- Finalizing agreements for SNC to carry out certain duties upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council.
- Initiating the funding mechanism to compensate the SNC for all tasks performed.
- Building a web-based document library for PG&E lands that have been donated and approved through the California Public Utilities Commission.

Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery

The SNC will continue to facilitate and participate in a discussion with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), Inyo County, Friends of Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery, and the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in order to determine under what conditions the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery (MWFH) can be transferred to a third party. Actions to be undertaken in 2014-15 include:

- Pursue a decision by DFW and WCB about completing a Phase 2 environmental site assessment report. The Phase 2 report will provide information on the environmental condition of the facility – results may have an impact on the completion of a transfer if significant environmental issues are identified.
- Pursue a decision by DFW and WCB about completing the future-use document, which would limit the types of uses that could occur on the property if it were transferred to a third party.
- A decision by SNC whether to proceed with a potential transfer based on 1) the results of a Phase 2 report, 2) a finalized future use document and, 3) a credible plan in place for completing a potential transfer that has been agreed to by participating parties.
- Confirmation by Inyo County of a third party in place for a potential transfer and a plan completed for future use.

Internal Operations

The SNC will improve its internal operations in a number of areas, including taking the following actions:

- Developing new processes and evaluation tools to ensure SNC's training program is preparing staff to implement the SNC mission.
- Ensuring continuity of essential functions and operations following a catastrophic event by implementing SNC's Business Continuity Plan. Providing training for management as well as performing table-top exercises and drills to test SNC's technology recovery plan.
- Improving SNC network and information technology tools and services including continuous hardware assessment and modifications. Upgrading to SharePoint 2013 including development and implementation of a migration plan. Analyzing telecommunication and video conferencing systems to enhance communication mechanisms ensuring collaboration, efficiency and productivity across the organization.

- Developing Project Management tools to ensure that the SNC's processes, systems and tools are efficient and effective. This will include training staff to use the tools developed internally, as well as training and support for SNC users of Microsoft Project.
- Converting our current accounting and budget systems over to the statewide FISCAL system to maximize efficiency and effectively manage our resources.
- Improving SNC's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) storage procedures ensuring that critical data can be accessed and recovered from any location.

Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has made the educating of state legislators and their staff on the value of the Sierra Nevada and the need to invest in our Region a top outreach priority. During discussions regarding the 2014 Water Bond, SNC staff met with numerous members who represent districts outside of our Region and made progress in gaining their support. However, this continues to be a challenge and remains a top priority.

Some other state conservancies have a statutory relationship with members of the legislature. For example, Coastal and Santa Monica Conservancies have two members in each identified to “meet with the conservancy and participate in its activities to the extent that such participation is not incompatible with their respective positions as Members of the Legislature.” While the SNC has two Boardmembers appointed by the legislature, there is no identified relationship with members of the legislature.

Current Status

In order to assist in the SNC’s legislative outreach, staff has initiated the process to consider legislation to establish a statutory relationship with two members of each house of the legislature, one who represents the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Region, and one who does not. The SNC is using the language guiding the Coastal and Santa Monica Conservancies as the basis for this proposal. The SNC is currently following the process outlined by the Administration for consideration of legislative proposals.

The goal of the potential legislation is to have members of both houses of the legislature who are more knowledgeable about the SNC, our Region and our needs. It is anticipated that these members will advocate for us as key policy and funding issues are addressed in the state legislature.

Next Steps

The SNC will continue to work with the Natural Resources Agency on our proposal. If the Board approves the concept and it is approved for introduction by the Administration, SNC staff will pursue introduction of the proposal in the 2015-16 legislative session.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board authorize staff to continue to pursue the legislation identified in this staff report.