

March 12 - 13, 2014
California Department of Food and
Agriculture, Auditorium
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and thanked the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Executive Officer and staff for the previous day's informative joint meeting with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (Delta Conservancy).

II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul administered the oath to Amador County Supervisor Luis Boitano and acknowledgement was given that Boardmember Ishida was sworn in on the previous day.

III. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, Todd Ferrara, Bob Kirkwood, Eraina Ortega, Bob Johnston, John Brissenden, Pam Giacomini, Sherrie Thrall, Byng Hunt, Allen Ishida, Jerry Bird (alternate for Bernie Gyant, U.S. Forest Service), and Reuben Leal (alternate for Este Stifel, Bureau of Land Management)

Absent: Don Neubacher and Ron Briggs

IV. Approval of December 5, 2013 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Boardmember Brissenden asked that a revision be made to Agenda Item XI. Allocation of up to \$1 million for Restoration and Rehabilitation Efforts Related to the Rim Fire to read "to fruition" instead of "from fruition."

ACTION: Boardmember Giacomini moved and Boardmember Thrall seconded a motion to approve the December 5, 2013 Meeting Minutes with Boardmember Brissenden's edits incorporated. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

Boardmember Brissenden acknowledged Ron Hames, Supervisor and SNC Liaison from Alpine County, who was in attendance.

VI. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Kirwan asked if any Boardmembers had comments related to the previous day's joint Board meeting with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy.

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Boardmembers Kirkwood, Brissenden and Kirwan commented on the positive nature of the joint meeting with the hope that the SNC will continue to build on the relationship with the Delta Conservancy, and perhaps reach out to the Coastal Conservancy.

Kirwan also asked Jim Branham, SNC Executive Officer, to address the letter received from Assembly Member Anthony Rendon's Office.

Branham mentioned the different approaches that legislators have been taking to craft a new water bond. In addition, he also discussed the Public Records Act (PRA) Request that SNC received from Assembly Member Anthony Rendon's office. Branham explained that SNC, as well as many other conservancies, received a request from Rendon's office for information regarding a contract with the Planning and Conservation League Foundation, which provides information on legislation and State policy and funding opportunities that are relevant to conservancies. Branham said SNC will be responding to that request by the deadline.

Kirkwood said staff should respond to the request by building a document that demonstrates that SNC's grant program is operated transparently and without earmarks, and that the water and forest-related projects that have been funded have benefit beyond the Sierra.

Boardmember Johnston said that we are the state agency that has the local knowledge to be effective. He said that the SNC is guided by state statute and is an instrument of the legislature. Johnston said that SNC can show that we have done a good job.

Boardmember Giacomini said that she agreed with Kirkwood's comments, as well as Senator Pavley's comments during the previous day's meeting about getting rid of the misconceptions about what conservancies do.

Branham said that once it was clear that Assembly Member Rendon's bill would not include direct allocations to conservancies, staff began focusing on ensuring that funding was provided to the Sierra Nevada Region.

Boardmembers Kirkwood, Johnston, and Kirwan requested that the Executive Officer draft a letter to Assembly Member Rendon's office indicating how effective the SNC is and the tremendous value that it brings to the Region and to the state. All other Boardmembers agreed.

Boardmember Brissenden asked whether Branham had had conversations with other conservancies about how they plan to respond to the PRA. Branham indicated that SNC has been in contact with other conservancies.

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Boardmember Ferrara noted that the California Natural Resources Agency has offered all of the conservancies assistance in responding to the PRA. In response to a question from Brissenden about whether Secretary Laird would engage in the education process about the value of conservancies with legislators, Ferrara responded that the Secretary Laird will continue to be supportive.

VII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Administrative Update

Branham introduced Amy Lussier, SNC's Chief of Administrative Services Division. Lussier gave an update on SNC's budget and three new staff members: Belinda Gutierrez, Jennifer Barnes, and Denice Mayberry. These three positions were filled in order to reallocate workload, fill a vacancy, and bring work in-house that had previously been completed externally.

Boardmember Kirkwood thanked Lussier for a brief report.

b. Governor's Budget/Cap and Trade Auction Revenue Update

Branham discussed the new Cap and Trade Auction Revenue funding source that has been created as a result of Assembly Bill 32. Branham said that SNC had submitted a proposal for funding that could be utilized in the Sierra Nevada Region, but SNC has not been identified for funding in the Governor's budget. Branham said SNC has been in discussion with other departments that were identified, specifically CalFire and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, about ways to work collaboratively on projects.

c. Rim Fire Update

Branham gave an update on SNC's activities related to the Rim Fire. Branham said SNC has been involved in discussions with the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions group and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) relative to potential projects to be funded with the SNC's funds. SNC has also had discussion with other state departments and non-profits about leveraging those funds. Additional conversations are being held with the USFS to determine if there are projects that could be implemented with SNC funds that may not require a full environmental impact statement (EIS) process. Branham said staff will continue to stay engaged and will bring projects to the Board for funding when they are ready.

Branham said the USFS is in the process of preparing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to support salvage logging in the burn area. Branham said that SNC Staff helped convene two (2) technical workshops for USFS scientific and line staff and a variety of stakeholders on ecological issues to be addressed in the Salvage Harvest EIS. Branham said input from those workshops has been provided to the Stanislaus National Forest and that there is interest in conducting additional workshops on reforestation and other restoration efforts later in the year.

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Branham also noted that SNC has been incorporating messaging around the Rim Fire in outreach materials.

d. Policy and Outreach Update

Branham said that numerous water bond proposals were introduced prior to the recent bill introduction deadline. He said that creation of new storage capacity is a major topic discussed in these bills, and that a number of the bills do not incorporate funding for the upper watershed.

Boardmember Ishida mentioned that the San Joaquin Valley counties supervisors and the Delta counties supervisors are developing their position on the water bond proposals that would include funding for the SNC and the Delta Conservancy. Ishida said the supervisors are looking for support for the effort, and that it is important to the counties that they have input in the water bond process. Branham said that he would appreciate any additional information that Ishida could share about their efforts.

Angela Avery, Regional Policy and Programs Manager, said the California Water Action Plan was finalized and that SNC Staff were very pleased to see that it included Sierra Nevada-specific language and mention of the importance of source watershed health, an inclusion advocated by the SNC and its partners.

Avery provided an overview of other legislative issues including legislation that would establish a Natural Resources Climate Improvement Program and a bill proposing a park bond. Avery said that SNC is called out specifically for funding under the forest and working lands chapter in the Park Bond.

Avery updated the Board on a number of other activities in which the Regional Policy and Programs team has been involved, including tours for legislators and their staff in the Sierra in coordination with Assemblyman Dahle. Avery also said that staff are tracking and participating in Cap and Trade, Abandoned Mine Lands, and water policy hearings as appropriate. In addition, Avery said that the Sierra Business Council (SBC) is actively working to build a Sierra coalition focused on elevating the importance of the Region and that SNC Staff are supporting that effort.

Avery also provided an update on various outreach efforts including Web page updates and increased use of social media.

Avery mentioned that planning for the 2014 Great Sierra River Cleanup has begun and that this year the event will be held on Saturday, September 20th.

Boardmember Ferrara said that every Monday the California Natural Resources Agency puts out a two-page fact sheet on real-time drought information and suggested that SNC Staff share with the Board if Boardmembers are interested.

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Board Chair Kirwan asked whether Yosemite is open for public access, or whether it remains closed due to the fire. Branham said that the park is generally open, but that there may be some areas that remain closed.

Boardmember Johnston asked whether the interactive maps would be linked to The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) "*Where Does Your Water Come From?*" online map. Avery said that SNC's current map has been developed internally but that the intent is to still work with TNC in the future.

Boardmember Brissenden asked if the map focus moved from the tap to the Sierra. Avery said yes, and that the focus of the maps would be to link decision makers in urban areas to the source of water for their district.

Johnston suggested that the maps include information on the cost comparison in a particular watershed between dam construction, and meadow restoration or forest restoration.

e. SNFCI Update

Branham said that at the regional level, the SNFCI Coordinating Council has focused on developing a set of issues that the group believes are significant issues for the USFS to address in order to increase the pace and scale of forest treatments. Branham said that staff met with Randy Moore and Bernie Gyant, both of USFS, recently on this topic and that we are in the process of agreeing on a course of action. Branham said that there will be a meeting at the end of next month to continue this discussion.

Branham said that Mandy Vance, SNC Mt. Whitney Area Representative, has been working with the USFS to develop a conservation plan for the Pacific fisher in the Southern Sierra. He noted that SNC has entered in to an agreement with the Pacific Southwest Research Station to address issues and research needed around illegal marijuana grows on USFS lands in the Southern Sierra. As a result of this research, the Research Station has identified a connection between Fisher mortality and rodenticide used at illegal grow sites.

VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, reminded Boardmembers that it is time to file Statement of Economic Interest Forms and that forms should be sent to Theresa Burgess in Auburn. Sproul also said that every couple of years Boardmembers need to take an ethics course and that Boardmembers should expect to get an email or notification about that requirement soon. Sproul said she continues to follow updates related to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Sproul also said that she continues to watch legislation for any updates related to SNC as well.

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Boardmember Kirkwood asked staff to send a copy of what Boardmembers are required to file for the Statement of Economic Interest Form.

Boardmember Kirwan asked what the deadline for those forms would be.

Sproul said she would follow up with the Board and Theresa Burgess on the form deadline and the information needed to complete them.

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

Branham noted that about half of the funds available in this grant round will be allocated if the projects proposed during this meeting are approved, and that staff anticipates bringing additional Abandoned Mine Lands projects to the Board for consideration in June. Branham introduced Mt. Lassen Area Manager Bob Kingman and Mt. Whitney Area Manager Julie Bear.

Kingman introduced the Plumas Community Energy Wood Processing Facility and presented the staff recommendation that the Board award a grant in the amount of \$350,000 to the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment to complete the project.

Kingman introduced the Sagehen Basin Old Forest Sensitive Species Habitat Restoration Project and presented the staff recommendation that the Board award a grant in the amount of \$349,140 to the National Forest Foundation to complete the project.

Kingman introduced the American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break Project and presented the staff recommendation that the Board award a grant in the amount of \$288,206 to the City of Auburn Fire Department to complete the project. Kingman noted that this grant would compliment a past grant for Phase I funded by SNC.

Bear introduced the Soaproot Restoration Project and presented the staff recommendation that the Board award a grant in the amount of \$349,788 to the Sierra National Forest to complete the project. Bear noted that this project was developed by the Dinkey Creek Collaborative, and is a portion of a larger effort.

Public Comment:

Brett Storey, representing Placer County, said that he supports all four projects being considered by the Board, and that all of these projects are in the spirit of why the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is so valuable to the state. Storey said that the Sagehen Project would benefit Placer County's Cabin Creek Biomass Facility once it is constructed, and that the American River Shaded Fuelbreak would compliment efforts and funding that Placer County has invested in the American River Watershed in the past. He also said that Placer County and Placer County Water Agency will be contributing additional funds to the American River Shaded Fuelbreak.

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Jonathan Kusel, from the Sierra Institute for Community and Environment thanked the Board for considering the project and thanked Brett Story for his comments. He noted that the Sierra Institute is building on the work that Placer County has done. Kusel thanked SNC for the effort that Kingman and SNC Staff put in to develop and move the project forward.

Boardmember Kirkwood noted that the project proposal indicated that the facility would eventually be expanded to a 3MW power facility, and asked where in the expansion process the project currently was. Kusel said that SNC's funds would give Sierra Institute the ability to be ready for future expansions, and that the Sierra Institute is still developing the demand and financial model that will carry the project through future expansions.

Kevin Hanley, Auburn City Council and Chair of the Greater Auburn Fire Safe Council, supported the American River Shaded Fuelbreak and said that every dollar invested in the project will go a long way. He said that the fire department has developed partnerships to ensure that those funds are used efficiently. In addition, Hanley stated that the City and other partners have committed to invest in future maintenance of the project area.

ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded a motion to (a) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Sagehen Forest Habitat Restoration Project (SNC 773), 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 (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Soaproot Stewardship Project (SNC 786), 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 (c) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Plumas Community Energy Wood Processing Facility Project (SNC 780) and the American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break Project (SNC 788); (d) authorize award of grants 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 and to file Notices of Determination for the Sagehen and Soaproot Projects. The motion passed unanimously.

X. **SNC Grant #412 – Sequoia Riverlands Trust (ACTION)**

Braham said this is the first time staff has brought a grant agreement back to the Board for the approval of a scope change, and that it was necessary to bring the request to the Board because the changes were beyond the delegated authority.

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Bear introduced Bobby Kamansky, Mt. Whitney Area Representative, and Chris Moi from the Sequoia Riverlands Trust. Kamansky updated the Board on the most recent activities related to SNC grant #412, and described the scope change being recommended.

Boardmembers Kirkwood and Giacomini asked some clarifying questions as to the proximity of the properties being proposed for inclusion. Staff provided clarification as to the location and resource values of these properties.

Kirkwood asked that maps be included in the Board packet for all projects that the Board would be considering in the future.

Boardmember Brissenden asked if SNC had toured these properties during a past Board meeting. Kamansky said that SNC toured the Toppin Ranch, and not this property.

Chris Moi from Sequoia Riverlands Trust clarified that the two (2) of the new properties are adjacent to each other. He also said that this planning grant has been essential for capacity building within Sequoia Riverlands Trust, and thanked the Board for their consideration.

Boardmember Johnston echoed Kirkwood's request for maps.

ACTION: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Ishida seconded a motion to approve recommended changes to the current scope of work, deliverables, and extension of the project completion date for Sequoia Riverlands Trust SNC Grant #412. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Sierra Nevada Geotourism (ACTION)

Kingman updated the Board on the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project and the associated mobile applications (apps). Kingman said that more than 5,700 people have downloaded the apps which are available for free to the public. Kingman described the recommendation that the Board authorize a grant of the two (2) mobile apps to the Sierra Business Council.

Brissenden asked when more print maps would be available. Kingman said that staff is working with the Office of State Publishing on a contract for the third reprint of the map, and that more maps should be available in May or June.

Public Comment:

Nicole Benter, Senior Program Director with the Sierra Business Council (SBC) thanked SNC for collaboration on the Geotourism Project. Benter said that SBC supports the action and looks forward to taking over the management of the apps to fulfill the project's mission.

ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Hunt seconded a motion to approve granting Sierra Business Council two mobile phone applications for management and maintenance for the Sierra Nevada Geotourism Project. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. Biomass Utilization Efforts (Informational)

Kim Carr, SNC Sustainability Specialist, discussed SNC's current activities related to supporting biomass utilization in the Sierra. Carr said that SNC is called out in the 2012 State Bioenergy Action Plan to support efforts in the Sierra related to getting small-scale forest bioenergy facilities up and operating in high fire severity areas. Carr mentioned a variety of barriers that make establishing facilities difficult such as attracting private funding, timing and availability of public funds, supply security, and environmental concerns related to past development of large facilities, among other things. Carr noted that SNC Staff are working to address those barriers in the Region. Carr said through SNC's involvement and dialogue, environmental groups have become more supportive of small-scale facilities and through negotiations with environmental groups both the Placer County and the Madera County projects have been able to move forward.

Branham acknowledged Carr's important role in helping to move projects forward, in particular her efforts in North Fork.

Kirkwood asked whether the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) has staff in California. Carr said that CBD has an office in San Francisco.

Brissenden complimented Carr for her work, and noted that CBD had been an ally for many Off Highway Vehicles projects that Brissenden worked on with California State Parks.

Boardmember Giacomini asked that Carr keep her apprised of activities as they may apply to projects in the North Subregion.

XIII. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Ishida said that he is glad to be back after six (6) years and said that when he first joined the Board the Conservancy was still developing goals and procedures. He said that in time SNC has proven itself as a successful entity to grade and score projects. Ishida said that two years ago the San Joaquin Valley Partnership, which is made up of the San Joaquin Valley counties from Stockton to Bakersfield, engaged the Delta counties and talked about water. Ishida said that the 12 counties identified a list of priority projects, some of which were part of the San Joaquin River settlement, but none of those have been funded. Ishida said that the group recently began meeting again to discuss a water bond and that the 12 counties have basically agreed that storage is the biggest issue in a water bond, that there is no better agency to administer funds for forest restoration than the SNC. He

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said that the 12 counties would be putting together a white paper on their bond proposal, that it would be available within the month, and that SNC's input would be welcome.

Board Chair Kirwan encouraged Branham and Ishida to work together on the issue.

Giacomini said that she was looking forward to taking the white paper to her Board for discussion and noted that the Shasta County Board of Supervisors sent a letter weighing in on Senate Bill 848. She said that the way the bill seems to currently read, only urban disadvantaged communities would have access to funding, and that there are many rural disadvantaged communities that would be left out.

Ishida said that he wanted to extend the definition of "disadvantaged communities" not just to urban communities, but also to cities in rural areas.

Brissenden thanked Ishida for his compliments to staff and on SNC's strength in getting funding on the ground and asked how best to get the legislation to acknowledge the successes of the Conservancy's grant program.

XIV. Public Comments

Tom Hellmann representing the California Park and Recreation Society presented the SNC and SBC the 2013 Award of Excellence for Marketing and Communication for the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project.

Board Chair Kirwan announced that the next SNC Board meeting will be June 11-12th in Shasta County.

XV. Adjournment

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 11:32 AM.