

March 7- 8, 2012  
Red Bluff Community/Senior Center  
1500 South Jackson Street  
Red Bluff, CA 96080



March 7, 2012

**Board Tour**

**1:00 – 5:00 PM**

Members of the Board and staff will participate in a field trip to explore issues and activities relevant to the Conservancy's mission in the North 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 Hampton Inn & Suites Red Bluff located at 520 Adobe Road, Red Bluff, CA 96080.

**Reception**

**5:30 – 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 Hampton Inn & Suites Red Bluff located at 520 Adobe Road, Red Bluff, CA 96080.

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March 8, 2012

**9:00 – 1:00 PM**

**Board Meeting**

*(End time of the meeting is approximate)*

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**
- III. **Roll Call**
- IV. **Approval of December 8, 2011 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**
- V. **Public Comments**  
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.
- VI. **Board Chair's Report**
- VII. **Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
  - a. Administrative Update
  - b. Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery Update
  - c. Board Receptions Policy
  - d. North Central Subregion Report
- VIII. **Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**  
The Deputy Attorney General will provide a review of annual conflict of interest statements and ethics training.
- IX. **2012-13 Action Plan (ACTION)**  
The Board will be briefed on the 2012-13 SNC Action Plan, may make modifications to the Plan and may act to approve the Plan.

- X. 2011-12 Healthy Forests Grant Program Update (ACTION)**  
The Board will be updated on the status of the 2011-12 Grant Program and may act upon staff recommendations relating to funding allocations, timing of grant awards and Board Subregional committees.
- XI. 2012-13 Proposition 84 Grant Guidelines Update (INFORMATIONAL)**  
The Board will be briefed on the draft 2012-13 Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands Grant Guidelines and may provide direction to staff for modifications to the draft Guidelines.
- XII. Updates on Various SNC Activities (INFORMATIONAL)**
- a. Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Update
  - b. Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project Update
  - c. Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council Update
- XIII. Boardmembers' Comments**  
Provide an opportunity for members of the Board to make comments on items not on the agenda.
- XIV. Public Comments**  
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.
- XV. Adjournment**

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Meeting Materials are available on the SNC Web site at [www.sierranevada.ca.gov](http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov). For additional information or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Mrs. Burgess at (530) 823-4672, toll free at (877) 257-1212; or via email at [tburgess@sierranevada.ca.gov](mailto:tburgess@sierranevada.ca.gov). 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn CA 95603. If you need reasonable accommodations please contact Mrs. Burgess at least **five** working days in advance, including documents in alternative formats.

**Closed Session:** Following, or at any time during the meeting, the Conservancy may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation; property negotiations; or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126(a), (c) (7), or (e).

**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**December 7-8, 2011**  
**Hugh M. Burns Fresno State Building**  
**2550 Mariposa Mall, Room #1036**  
**Fresno, CA 93704**



**I. Call to Order**

Board Vice-Chair Bill Nunes called the meeting to order at 9:36 AM.

**II. Roll Call**

**Present:** Bill Nunes, Daniel Jiron, Linda Arcularius, Todd Ferrara, Bob Kirkwood, John Brissenden, Brian Dahle, Dick Pland, David Graber, and Tom Wheeler

**Absent:** BJ Kirwan, Ted Owens, Bob Johnston and Pedro Reyes

**III. Approval of September 8, 2011 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

There were no changes to the meeting minutes.

**Action:** Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Dahle seconded a motion to approve the September 8, 2011 Meeting Minutes. Boardmember Pland abstained from voting. The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Public Comments**

Cindy Whelan, with the Sierra National Forest, thanked the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) for its work in the forest, and said she appreciates the efforts of SNC staff Mandy Vance and Elissa Brown for their collaborative work. Whelan said the Sierra National Forest is working very hard to provide sustainable national forests, and has worked with the SNC on 11 different grants. The SNC staff has assisted in securing \$65,000 in meadow restoration funds with the Coarsegold Resource Conservation District, which would not have been possible without the SNC staff. Whelan said she looks forward to continued work with the SNC staff and hope that the Board continues to support their efforts and support efforts together to increase capacity, include the community and to move forward with forest restoration.

**V. Board Chair's Report**

Vice-Chair Nunes announced that Board Chair Kirwan is in New York for the birth of her grandson, which is why she is not in attendance.

**VI. Election of Vice-Chair (Action)**

Vice-Chair Nunes said it had been his pleasure to serve as the Vice-Chair for the past year. Noting that his term is up, he asked for nominations for the next Vice-Chair.

**Action:** Boardmember Dahle moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded a motion to approve the nomination of Boardmember Linda Arcularius as Vice-Chair for 2012. The motion passed unanimously.

## VII. Board Meeting Calendar

SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham said the plan was to continue with the quarterly meeting format for the Governing Board meetings. If the schedule is approved, Branham said, next year the Board will have convened in every county within the Region. He added the Regional Council of Rural Counties meeting calendar was taken into consideration and that there were no conflicts.

**Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Dahle seconded a motion to approve staff recommendation for the 2012 Board meeting schedule. The motion passed unanimously.**

## VIII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

### A. Administrative Issues

Administrative Services Chief Theresa Parsley said the state travel and hiring freeze has been lifted.

With respect to the Proposition 84 Grant program, Parsley reported that staff is very busy with the Healthy Forests grant application development phase; while at the same time area staff are conducting site visits. Combined with project close out site visits, staff will be doing a lot of travelling over the next few months. She said status reports on the 2011-12 grant round would be coming to the Board shortly, as well as a planning report on the upcoming Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands grant round.

Parsley said she is looking forward to closing out the contract for the "Easy Grants" software program. Additionally, more detail has been added to the Board's staff report as to appropriations, expenditures and balances for Proposition 84 grant funding.

Funding: The SNC was successful in gaining re-appropriation unspent Proposition 84 grant funds from previous years, according to Parsley. As of the end of October, the SNC expects to have approximately \$12 million available for award in the final two grant rounds. Parsley said the Board will be kept informed as those figures become more firm.

The Environmental License Plate Fund, the source of the SNC's operational funding, appears to remain stable at this time, according to Parsley. Facilities: The SNC has identified a great location for its Mariposa Office, one block off Main Street. Parsley said she is working with the Department of General Services to complete work on the lease and hope to be moved into the new site by Spring of 2012.

At the headquarters office in Auburn, the building owner is installing solar panels on the roof of SNC headquarters at no cost to the SNC, but energy cost savings

will be passed on to the SNC. An energy savings tracking link will be provided on the SNC Web site.

B. Board Receptions

Branham raised a concern of a perception issue related to finding support for sponsors for Board meeting receptions. He welcomed any thoughts from the Board.

Boardmember Graber said the receptions are valued and would like to see them continue in any form. Boardmember Brissenden said he agrees with the awkwardness of finding sponsors, but values the experience of the receptions. He suggested a format be developed and brought to the Board.

Boardmember Dahle said the Supervisors should be more engaged in setting up receptions and not rely as much on the SNC staff.

Boardmember Kirkwood encouraged more Boardmembers to attend the receptions and the Board tours. Kirkwood said the exchange with the people on the tours and those working on the projects is very valuable.

Vice-Chair Nunes said it is hard to attend all the functions without spending two nights. Boardmember Arcularius agreed it would be good to have a format, but would like to have some guidance on what is allowable.

Branham said a guidance document will be provided at the March 2012 Board meeting and welcomed input from the Board relative to attendance and a format for the receptions. Arcularius said the receptions do not have to be elaborate; the purpose is to get together for the exchange of information and conversation.

C. 2011-12 Healthy Forests Grant Program Update

Branham introduced the update by reporting that SNC staff had done a great job of soliciting projects for this year's program, consistent with previous discussions with the Board.

Mt. Lassen Area Manager Bob Kingman provided the update and said the SNC's outreach efforts were so successful that the number of applications received doubled in this grant round. The SNC received 196 pre-applications from 122 entities, requesting \$25.5 million against approximately \$5 million of available funding. Of the 196 applications, Kingman said all but 13 were invited to submit a full application. Given this large number, the SNC is looking at its internal capacity to review and visit the full number of projects it is likely to engage. Kingman said the predominant number of pre-applications received were for the reduction of fuel and fire hazards, and the next largest group was for forest

improvement. He added that there were also 23 meadow restoration project pre-applications submitted.

Branham said there were a few issues he wanted to bring to the Board's attention. The first was the need for a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) "crosswalk" for federal applicants. He noted that the SNC had received more than 30 pre-applications submitted by federal agencies. He said the SNC is willing to act as a lead agency for "categorically exempt" projects under CEQA, but will not be able to do so for any projects beyond that designation. Branham reported that some federal project applications will be able to move forward as categorically exempt, but a larger subset will not likely meet the categorical exemption requirements, and no other CEQA agency will have standing as a lead agency. Given this set of circumstances, SNC will not be able to consider as many of these projects as it would like. Branham added SNC is trying to address this issue for the future.

Branham said local smaller organizations such as Fire Safe Councils may face the same challenge in providing enough information to meet a categorical exemption status under CEQA. At least one such organization has determined that it may have to withdraw their four pre-applications because of this issue. Branham noted per SNC Grant Guidelines, the CEQA compliance must be demonstrated as part of the full application, and the deadline is coming up too quickly for this to be resolved.

Boardmember Dahle asked if the counties could help resolve these issues with legislation. Branham said on the CEQA issue, it is possible, but it would be a little more difficult for NEPA.

Boardmember Jiron said in his role with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) he is willing to work with the Board and SNC to find a solution. Branham suggested one approach may be for the USFS to include the analysis required under CEQA while it is completing NEPA requirements. He stated this could help create the crosswalk between the two so federal agencies may not need to go back and address CEQA requirements later.

Boardmember Arcularius said that this issue came up on the "Digital 395" project on the east side of the Sierra and she has asked the groups involved in the project to report back and document the ways that NEPA and CEQA could be done together. She said she would provide that data when it becomes available.

As for grant funding, Branham noted from Parsley's report that approximately \$2 million more is now available than was originally estimated. He said staff could work with a Board committee to suggest how the final available amount may be

divided, and present those suggestions to the full Board at its next quarterly meeting.

Branham noted the final complicating issue in this grant round is the large volume of pre-applications received, which might make it challenging to get all evaluations completed in time for approval at the June 2012 Board meeting. If that turns out to be the case, he suggested an alternative might be to process most of the Category 1 projects in June in time for the work season and bring back the additional projects at the following Board meeting. He suggested the proposed Board Committee could guide staff on these issues, as a decision would have to be made before the next Board meeting.

Boardmembers Wheeler and Ferrara volunteered to serve on the Subcommittee and Boardmember Jiron volunteered to assist.

Boardmember Kirkwood suggested that the additional anticipated \$2 million should go to the Healthy Forests projects (the current grant round) noting the high number of applications and the need for the work in the forest.

#### D. South Subregion Report

Mt. Whitney Area Manager Julie Bear acknowledged and thanked the Sierra Foothill Conservancy for all their work on the tour and the reception from the previous day. She then introduced SNC staff Mandy Vance and Bobby Kamansky to present the report.

Kamansky gave an overview of the Subregion's population, demographics, wildlife, vegetation, forests, and geographic features. He noted the snowpack tends to last late into the summer season in this Subregion, as the peaks are very high. He added that Kings Canyon is one of the deepest canyons in the country.

Vance touched on the work the SNC has been doing in the Subregion through its grant program. She said there is a strong interest in education and interpretative projects as well as planning and site improvements. She added at least 11 grant applications were submitted from Fresno County for the current grant round, which is an improvement. Vance said there are a number of innovative projects in the Subregion. She singled out in particular the Willow Creek and Sierra Forest and Communities Collaborative (SFCC) projects.

Boardmember Wheeler noted that Vance does a great job in Madera County.

Boardmember Graber asked if the Subregion's capacity for putting together strong application packages has improved. Vance said it is too soon to determine until the grant evaluations process moves forward. Kamansky added that the new pre-application process has helped to bring in more groups to the process.

Vance reported that the SFCC emerged out of willingness to collaborate and make projects sustainable. She noted that the cross-cultural communications have been very good. It serves the watershed that includes the communities of Oakhurst and North Fork.

SNC staff member Elissa Brown reported on the possible development of a small biomass power facility on the North Fork Mill site. She said when the mill closed in 1994 it devastated the community. However, the land was given to the North Fork Community Economic Development Council. The SNC helped write a grant to do a feasibility analysis on the cost/benefits of operating a biomass plant at North Fork, and the analysis could be used as guidance for other such efforts around the Sierra.

Based on this report, it was suggested the North Fork could benefit from a one-megawatt “heat-and-power” facility on the historic North Fork Mill site. Such a facility would provide economic value to the biomass taken off the forest, and the facility itself would provide an economic value to the community. It would also reduce current “pile-and-burn” practice, which causes air pollution.

Boardmember Wheeler thanked Bear, Brown, Vance and Kamansky for their support and guidance for the collaborative and for progress at the North Fork Mill site. He said it has been very positive to see people from all aspects of forest management come together to create a better relationship. He feels it is a great model for the Sierra Nevada and that he has been getting emails and phone calls in support of the project. Wheeler noted a recent report that indicated that when the forest is thinned and managed well, the water yield is 10-30 percent higher.

Branham said the SNC views the North Fork Mill site as an “anchor facility” for biomass, saw logs, and a kiln to dry the wood. He added his appreciation for the positive feedback he has received for the efforts of SNC staff.

**IX. Deputy Attorney General’s Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, reported that Governor Brown has signed Senate Bill 226. The bill changed Public Resources Code Section 21084, to protect projects, which are categorically exempt under CEQA from being affected later if someone has a concern about greenhouse gas emissions.

**X. Land Conservation and Wildlife Habitat System Indicators Report (ACTION)**

Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan reviewed with the Board their previous actions, adopting a set of 19 system indicators that help the SNC and others understand the conditions of the Sierra and better advocate for work throughout the Region. The first report on demographics was presented in September. Reports on water and air quality, climate, agricultural land and the forest will be presented at future Board meetings.

Keegan introduced Elizabeth van Wagtendonk, Mt. Whitney Area Representative to present the work completed on Land Conservation and Wildlife Habitat indicators. Van Wagtendonk said the GIS data used to help map these lands came from three data sets: California Protected Area Database (CPAD), Green Info Network and the Department of Fish and Game. Van Wagtendonk summarized the report for the Board and answered various questions related to the limitations of the available data, ownership and fragmentation issues, and the challenges of obtaining conservation easement information. Van Wagtendonk said the next steps include posting information on the Web site and over time the SNC would bring in and share new sources of data and additional details.

Boardmember Kirkwood suggested that this report may want to emphasize the acres of lands conserved by ownership, noting that SNC is not interested in adding to the list of publicly owned lands for tax and other reasons, rather that SNC's target is the number of private lands under conservation easement.

Boardmember Arcularius said she wanted to be sure that if future parcel easement information is available, that the SNC would not post "red stars" on these private landowner's parcels of land.

Boardmember Brissenden suggested that the Assessor's Association of California may be a source of future information. Van Wagtendonk indicated that we had attempted to get information from each county's assessor, but that proved to be very expensive.

Boardmember Graber said that he feels the project is very valuable. He asked if there is an error level in the data. Van Wagtendonk responded that there is no error level specified for this data, but cautioned anyone using it to understand that it is coarse and represents a statewide/regional scale, so should not be applied on a smaller level.

Boardmember Dahle said he was concerned about the limits and potential for error with this data and would like that noted in the report.

Boardmember Graber asked if the data had been peer-reviewed; Van Wagtendonk responded that it had not, but reminded the Board that all of this data had come from other sources and was not original.

**Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded a motion to approve the second System Indicators Report. The motion passed unanimously.**

**XI. 2012-13 Action Plan (INFORMATIONAL)**

Keegan said the SNC is implementing actions from the 2012-13 Action Plan, but that due to current grants work-related workload, the specific Action Plan will not be ready for Board review until the March meeting.

Boardmember Brissenden asked for an update on the Statewide Conservancy Summit Keegan recently attended. Keegan reported the Delta Conservancy coordinated this Summit and Natural Resources Secretary John Laird attended, as did the Deputy Directors of the other organizations. Keegan said it was a worthwhile meeting, with open discussion. She added that there was some discussion about “life after bond money” and that it was good to realize that the SNC has a lot of other work it is involved in beyond bond fund distribution. This was an open forum where the Conservancies were able to share what was and was not working for them. Other Conservancies were very interested in what the SNC is doing, according to Keegan.

**XII. 2012-13 Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands Grant Program Update (INFORMATIONAL)**

Mt. Whitney Area Manager Julie Bear said SNC is revising its Grant Guidelines for the next grant cycle and will be doing outreach to better understand needs in the Region. There is about \$5 million available for projects focused on maintaining the viability of agricultural lands and ranches in the Sierra. Projects will also need to directly benefit, or result in the protection of, watersheds and align with Proposition 84 funding requirements.

Preliminary examples include stream and meadow restoration, riparian fencing, conservation easements, and invasive weed removal. Bear said the SNC will seek input from different organizations and partners who are connected to ranch and agricultural lands. An upcoming opportunity of note is the Rangeland Coalition Conference, January 19-20 in Davis. The SNC will be hosting an information gathering opportunity at the Conference. Bear noted information on the conference will be put on the SNC Web site.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked if we had any indication of the preliminary interest level for this round of grants. Bear feels that this round will be more modest because this is an area that we have not been working in as actively or long. Boardmember Nunes feels SNC will be surprised by the number of applications received.

**XIII. Updates on Various SNC Activities (INFORMATIONAL)**

**A. Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)**

Sustainable Initiatives Coordinator Kim Carr said a big part of the SNFCI program is working with the local collaboratives, gaining support from diverse stakeholders, so that work can be done out in the forest. She identified several local collaboratives in the Sierra including the following: Burney-Hat Creek, Yosemite-

Stanislaus Solutions in Tuolumne County, the Amador-Calaveras Consensus, and the Sierra Forest and Community Collaborative.

Carr pointed out that in the northern Sierra, some saw mill infrastructure exists, but much of it is idle. Further south, very little infrastructure remains.

The SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council continues to target work being done by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), including the Forest Plan revisions. A Coordinating Council working group is meeting with the USFS on “intelligent design” ideas for projects in the forest to integrate a balanced revenue stream, work with NEPA barriers and stewardship contracts, and to continue building on the efforts of strong collaboratives.

In terms of funding, Carr noted that federal budgets are declining and the SNC is working with other to identify new revenue sources to conduct the work. Part of that work, she said, includes policies and new technologies to utilize the biomass in the forest, reduce the transportation costs, create local jobs, and meet the “triple bottom line” that is critical to the mission. The SNC is also looking at quantifying the environmental benefits, looking at the opportunities within the ecosystem services, determining benefits for the downstream users, and how could they engage by investing in some of the headwaters restoration efforts.

Boardmember Jiron said he enjoyed working with the SNFCI Coordinating Council. One of the tools USFS provides is long-term stewardship contract solutions, and Congress is working on that. He also said the new USFS “Planning Rule” document would be out “soon.”

Boardmember Wheeler said he appreciated Jiron’s remarks and added that stewardship contracting is very important.

**B. Great Sierra River Cleanup Final Report**

Branham said the event was a success again this year and applauded the efforts of Coordinator Brittany Juergenson and Student Assistant Candice Heinz. He said this has become a signature event for the SNC and that an East Bay area legislator participated as a sponsor this year. Next year’s event is September 15 and Branham urged the Board to participate.

**C. California State Water Plan Report Update**

Branham reported the SNC is represented by Program Manager Kerri Timmer, who will be working with key partners in developing the “Mountain Counties” portion of this report. This is a great opportunity to tell the story as it relates to the Sierra, including the need for investment. Timmer is also involved in some of the other issues that have been identified, including land use, sustainability and finance. This report may become a key document for decision makers around

legislation and funding. Branham said the SNC might need some support from Boardmembers on portions of the report.

The SNC is also tracking the Delta Plan, which has huge implications to the Delta and beyond. Staff is in a tracking mode on this plan. Kathy Mannion from RCRC is very involved with the water plan and will be a helpful source in assisting with tracking of the Plan.

D. Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council Update

Branham says it looks like PG&E's Stewardship Council is ready to donate a number of parcels to the USFS, which would involve the SNC as defined in an Memorandum Of Understanding adopted previously by the Board. Authority was delegated by the Board to the SNC to move forward with this process. The SNC is ready and willing to work on these as long as compensation is provided.

**XIV. Boardmember Comments**

Boardmember Dahle acknowledged and thanked outgoing Boardmembers Pland and Nunes for their contributions and service to the SNC and presented them with backpacks.

**XV. Public Comments**

Kent Smith, North Central Regional Manager with the Department of Fish and Game reported on a "success story" relative to the collaborative efforts in the Delta, which have lead to approximately 20,000 salmon returning to the Mokelumne River, downstream from the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group's (ACCG) forest initiatives. Smith said these kinds of efforts the SNC is supporting such as the ACCG are extremely valuable in forming collaboratives, not just in the Sierra, but elsewhere.

**XVI. Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Nunes adjourned the meeting at 12:10 PM, stating the next meeting will be held March 7-8, 2012, in Red Bluff.

### **Background**

As the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has changed and grown since its creation in September of 2004, SNC staff has worked to address its broad administrative needs, including assessment of its primary program staff classification, the Tahoe Conservancy Program Analyst series. While this class series served its purpose as we got started, issues with its use began to arise as we could not conduct civil service examinations in order to provide current employment lists for entry-level or promotional purposes. Last year it came to our attention that this classification was no longer in use by any department but for the SNC. We conducted a study of current active State civil service classifications and, after reviewing 12 different classification series and the primary classifications used by all state conservancies and the California Coastal Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game. We found that the Conservancy Project Development (CPD) Series most closely supported and aligned with the work of the SNC at this time. We completed our analysis, submitted it to the Department of Personnel Administration and are pleased to report they have authorized our use of the CPD Series for our program staff and managers. We will complete an exam plan in the next few months and expect to conduct our first CPD exams later this year. A special thanks is due to Amy Lebak who guided this change through the state personnel process.

### **Current Status - Grants Administration**

You will note that we have \$1.2 million remaining to be encumbered from the 2010-11 Fiscal Year (FY) awards. This is primarily due to an acquisition project appraisal delay which we continue to track. Once project close-outs are complete for the 2007-08 awards we expect to have at least \$12 million available to award in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 Grant Cycles. We are also wrapping up the final assessment of the four grantee audits we have received from the Department of Finance. We appreciate the additional guidance provided by these audits and are applying procedural and administrative changes accordingly.

### **Current Status - Budget**

We continue to process expenditures for the FY 2011-12 budget. We should see higher in-state travel numbers in the next quarter to reflect project applicant and close-out site visits conducted in December and January. We are busy completing service contracts and interagency agreements, which will be reflected in our next budget report.

### **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.**

<b>2011-12 SNC EXPENDITURES AND ENCUMBRANCES</b>				
<b>January 31, 2012</b>				
<b>State Operations</b>				
<i>Personal Services</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
SALARIES AND WAGES	1,824,355	974,139	850,216	53%
STAFF BENEFITS	563,000	343,518	219,482	61%
<b>Personal Services, Totals</b>	<b>\$2,387,355</b>	<b>\$1,317,657</b>	<b>\$1,069,698</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Operating Expenses &amp; Equipment</b>				
	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
GENERAL EXPENSE	196,066	86,327	109,738	44%
TRAVEL - IS	62,000	12,931	49,069	21%
TRAVEL - OS	-	-	0	0%
TRAINING	47,500	4,884	42,616	10%
FACILITIES	259,723	147,915	111,808	57%
UTILITIES	10,222	6,194	4,028	61%
CONTRACTS- INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT	1,138,250	375,209	763,041	33%
CONTRACTS- EXTERNAL	85,059	49,060	35,999	58%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	104,620	5,403	99,217	5%
CONSOLIDATED DATA CENTER	-	-	-	0%
EQUIPMENT	-	-	-	0%
OTHER ITEMS OF EXPENSE	170,548	11,367	159,181	7%
PRO RATA (control agency costs)	159,658	79,829	79,829	50%
<b>Operating Expenses &amp; Equipment, Totals</b>	<b>\$2,233,645</b>	<b>\$779,118</b>	<b>\$1,454,527</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Local Assistance</b>				
<i>Appropriation</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
2007 Original Appropriation (reapprop 11/12)	17,000,000	15,273,226	1,726,774	90%
2008 Original Appropriation (reapprop 11/12)	17,000,000	12,647,408	4,352,592	74%
2009 Original Appropriation * (3rd yr/3 yr enc)	15,448,000	8,809,990	6,638,010	57%
	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
<b>State Operations</b>	<b>4,621,001</b>	<b>2,096,775</b>	<b>2,524,225</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Local Assistance</b>	<b>49,448,000</b>	<b>36,730,625</b>	<b>12,717,375</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>SNC EXPENDITURES, TOTALS</b>	<b>\$54,069,001</b>	<b>\$38,827,400</b>	<b>\$15,241,601</b>	<b>72%</b>

\* Of the \$10 million awarded during the 10/11 fiscal year, \$1.2million remains to be encumbered.

### **Background**

At the September 2011 Board meeting, staff advised the Board of discussions with the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) regarding the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) willingness to consider accepting the ownership of a 40 acre parcel on Oak Creek, just northwest of the community of Independence in Inyo County. This site is home to the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery, a historic and iconic landmark in the Eastern Sierra. Since it is no longer operating as a hatchery due to a variety of constraints, DFG is interested in disposing of it either by sale, exchange, or transfer. Currently the hatchery and the surrounding park-like grounds are being used for community events, private functions and as a tourist attraction. A local nonprofit, Friends of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery, has been managing and operating a small on-site interpretive center and gift shop, conducting repair and maintenance while fundraising to enhance the property and sustain its programs. Inyo County has supported the Friends efforts with in-kind services and is currently involved in the on-going discussions about the hatchery's future.

A site visit by SNC staff was conducted in June and included representatives from the DFG, Inyo County and Friends of Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery. Subsequently, a meeting was convened to continue to explore options for conveying the property to a third party, perhaps temporarily, while the county and community conduct a feasibility study, potentially identify resources and develop a business or master plan for the property.

### **Current Status**

In recent weeks, SNC has renewed discussions with the DFG, as well as Inyo County as to the current situation. All parties remain interested in continuing discussions to determine the long-term disposition of the property in a manner that benefits the local community. Newly appointed DFG Director Chuck Bonham confirmed the Department's continued interest and indicated a desire to expedite discussions.

SNC staff is currently working with DFG, Inyo County and the Friends of Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery to determine key issues to be addressed, alternatives for future ownership and use, and a timeline for actions.

### **Next Steps**

It is anticipated that a specific plan for determining the ultimate disposition and use of this property will be developed in the coming weeks and the SNC Board may be asked at the June meeting to approve an authorization for the Executive Officer to enter into agreements at that time. SNC staff will continue to explore whether there is an appropriate role for the organization to play in the future, and if so further define it. It is anticipated this will include a limited amount of staff time and other resources, consistent with existing delegated authority to the Executive Officer.

**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.**

**Background**

Beginning with the June, 2006 Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board meeting, a community reception has been a part of the schedule as the meeting location has moved around the Region. Later this year, the SNC Governing Board will have met in all 22 counties that make up the SNC's Region.

**Current Status**

Boardmembers, staff and community partners have expressed the value in providing a less formal opportunity for interaction. The Board receptions are open to the public and are publicly noticed along with the Board field tour and meeting. No state funds are used for these receptions and sponsors for the events have included a wide range of partners throughout the Region.

**Next Steps**

In order to ensure that the receptions continue to occur in a manner that avoids the appearance of any conflict of interest, staff is recommending that future receptions meet the following criteria:

- SNC area staff will coordinate closely with the appropriate Subregional representative and/or the county liaison for that particular meeting. This will include coordination of location and potential sponsorship.
- Sponsors for receptions may not have a grant application being reviewed or a contract proposal being considered by the SNC at the time of the sponsorship.
- All sponsors will be identified and acknowledged in materials pertaining to the event.

**Recommendation**

**Staff recommends that the Board approve this guidance and directs staff to work with Boardmembers and county liaisons in arranging future receptions.**

### **Background**

The North Central Subregion of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) includes all of Plumas and Sierra Counties and the eastern portions of Butte and Tehama Counties down to the base of the Sierra foothills. The Subregion is served by the Mt. Lassen Area staff from both the Auburn office and the Susanville office.

The majority of land (58 percent) in the Subregion is in public ownership, primarily under U.S. Forest Service (USFS) management within three National Forests: Plumas National Forest, and portions of Tahoe and Lassen National Forests. Large amounts of private lands are under ownership or management by forest products companies. Sierra Valley, bridging Sierra and Plumas Counties at 5,000' elevation on the eastern edge of the Sierra Nevada, is the largest alpine valley in California, comprised of private ranches devoted to cattle and haying agriculture. There is also significant private ranching in the western foothills of Tehama and Butte Counties.

Aside from timber and ranching, the resource backbone that ties most of the Subregion together is the Feather River, which is the largest contributing watershed feeding the State Water Project, and also a significant source of hydroelectric power for the state. There are other important watersheds in the Subregion as well, including the Yuba River in Sierra County, Big Chico Creek in Butte County, and several drainages including Deer Creek and Mill Creek in Tehama County. Lake Almanor resides in the north of Plumas County.

Most of the Subregion is rural alpine or foothill terrain with scattered small communities. The population of the North Central Subregion within the SNC boundary is 88,750.

This population is not distributed uniformly. Plumas and Sierra Counties have a combined population of about 23,250, while the SNC portion of Tehama County consists only of 1,933 people. In contrast, eastern Butte County has substantial population concentration totaling 63,570, largely in Paradise, Magalia, and around Lake Oroville.

### **Current Status**

There has been one round of grant awards (March 2011) since the last North Central Subregion Report, with this Subregion receiving 5 grants totaling \$1,760,000 out of \$10 million awarded across the Region. Two of these grants (totaling \$1,540,000) were for conservation acquisitions in Sierra County, two grants were for pre-acquisition activities in Butte and Tehama Counties, and one was for preservation of a site containing warm springs in Plumas County. This brings the total of SNC grants to date for the North Central Subregion to 41, totaling \$11,266,119. Nearly \$9 million of this went towards land acquisition (conservation easements or fee title purchase by conservation organizations) in Sierra and Plumas Counties.

### Fuels and Fire Management

Reducing overstocked fuels to prevent the devastating impacts of catastrophic fires continues to be one of the greatest landscape challenges throughout the Subregion. There are numerous impediments to complete fire safety projects including the reduction of available funding to support Fire Safe Councils, and the closure and loss of lumber mills and local biomass electrical generation capability. The Loyalton biomass energy facility in Sierra County has been shut down again for the past year, and its future is uncertain (although recent developments are more promising).

SNC is supporting multi-prong strategies in every county to reduce fuel loading, create watershed-scale fuel breaks, tackle the challenges of economic biomass utilization, and assist with defensible space. These activities include the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI), a major SNC initiative to work with the Forest Service and other private and public stakeholders in collaborative efforts to reduce fuels, improve forest health, promote biomass utilization, and sustain local jobs.

Efforts to improve forest health and fuel loading, and reduce fire risk, are the focus of the current round of grant funding. Grant applications were received in January and are currently being evaluated.

### Working Landscapes

Working landscapes are vital to the economic, cultural, and environmental health of the Subregion. A variety of public and private tools and efforts are utilized to protect this asset and help ensure its economic viability. The Williamson Act has been a vital tool to this end. About 109,000 acres are under Williamson Act contracts in Plumas and Sierra Counties. There are also thousands of acres enrolled in the western foothills, primarily in Tehama County. (Most of the 288,000 acres under contract in Tehama and Butte Counties are in the Central Valley outside of the SNC Region.)

State subvention funding to the counties to offset lost tax revenues related to Williamson Act enrollment was discontinued in 2009, exacerbating challenging situations for counties trying to balance their continued protection of working landscapes with the loss of county revenues. A bill to preserve the program was signed by the governor in mid-2011, but that changed the operation of the program substantially. In lieu of reinstating transfer of state tax money to counties, individual contracts could be altered so that farmers would lose 10 percent of their tax savings. The increased taxes would flow directly to county governments. While the reconfigured program falls far short of providing the revenue support that county governments relied upon before, the program was essentially frozen, it was a positive acknowledgment of state policy makers as to the value of the program. Counties are still trying to sort how to react to these changes.

Conservation easements have been utilized in this Subregion as a tool to complement Williamson Act tax reductions to preserve working landscapes as well as watershed values.

Recreation and Tourism

The SNC has worked with the Sierra Business Council and National Geographic to continue development of the Geotourism MapGuide Project that has now extended to the entire Sierra Nevada. In 2011, hundreds of nominations were evaluated and added to the northern Sierra, which encompasses much of the North Central Subregion. A separate report on Geotourism is being presented to the Board.

Next Steps

The Healthy Forests grant awards will push forward SNC efforts to support the North Central Subregion priorities in forest health and wildfire risk reduction. Additionally, SNC will continue efforts through SNFCI to aid in the development of collaborative forest efforts. SNC staff will continue to monitor local issues, attend stakeholder meetings, and develop strategies to better assist local efforts to improve the economic and environmental conditions of the Subregion.

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.**

### **Background**

In September 2011, the Board adopted a new Strategic Plan, which establishes objectives for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) within five areas of focus and lays out the strategies the organization will employ in meeting those objectives. The five areas of focus are:

- Healthy Forests
- Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands
- Watershed Protection and Restoration
- Promotion of Sustainable Tourism and Recreation
- Long-term Effectiveness of the SNC

Meeting Plan objectives require the organization to take a number of specific actions each year in support of the strategies included in the Plan. These actions are to be included in an annual Action Plan. The first Action Plan will cover a 16-month period from March 2012 through June 2013, future 12-month Action Plans align with the State fiscal year. This will enable staff to plan and expend budget resources in accordance with each year's Board approved Action Plan.

### **Current Status**

Staff has completed the development of the draft 2012-13 Action Plan ([Attachment A](#)). Input received from the Board, stakeholders and staff in strategic planning workshops throughout the Region and numerous meetings held over a year-long period not only served as the basis for the new Strategic Plan, but also as the basis for the Action Plan as well. The primary challenge encountered by staff in developing the draft Action Plan was to be realistic in determining what we can accomplish over the next 16 months given the relatively small size of the organization. This was especially difficult in light of all of the excellent ideas provided by stakeholders, including staff, and the enthusiasm staff has regarding the SNC's mission and their commitment to the objectives and strategies in the Strategic Plan.

After conducting a high level workload and resource analysis, staff is proposing to undertake the 13 projects and initiatives described in the draft Action Plan as the first steps in meeting Strategic Plan objectives. It should be noted, however, that as staff develops more detailed project plans, the specific activities associated with some projects may change. This may occur not only as a result of resource constraints, but as new opportunities present themselves (as well as external requirements that are not currently anticipated.)

### **Next Steps**

Almost all of these projects are already underway to some degree in accordance with the report provided to the Board in December 2011. Staff will update the Board at future Board meetings on the progress of, or significant changes in, the projects included in the Action Plan. Should staff want to recommend the inclusion of a new project in the Action Plan, staff will bring that recommendation to the Board for review

and approval (in the instance where new projects are driven externally and/or are time sensitive, this may result in more of an update and explanation than “approval”).

**Recommendation**

**Staff recommends the Board approve the proposed Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2012-13 Action Plan after reviewing and with any comments.**

*-- Draft --*  
**Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
2012-13 Action Plan**

The following represent the major initiatives and activities to be undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) between March 2012 and June 2013, consistent with the SNC's Strategic Plan (Plan). Upon approval by the SNC Governing Board, staff will use this Plan to guide activities for the period. 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.

**Grant Program**

Several important actions will be completed under the SNC Grant Program before June 2013, including:

- Closing-out Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-08 grant projects.
- Awarding the remaining Proposition 84 bond funds by completing the FY 2011-12 and 2012-13 grant awards from solicitation through the execution of grant agreements.
- Developing the operational policies and procedures necessary to improve the efficiency of the program.
- Continuing to effectively and efficiently meet reporting requirements related to bond expenditures and future bond sales.

**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 include:

- Continuing to support local collaborative efforts to develop projects consistent with SNFCI objectives.
- Working with the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council, the U.S. Forest Service, other state agencies and key stakeholders in identifying and supporting up to four demonstration projects showcasing ecological restoration in forested areas with strong collaboration and a focus on improving the local economies and social well-being.
- Working with the Coordinating Council and the Forest Service to complete the Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration Implementation Plan.
- Participating in various efforts to promote policy changes and investment in support of SNFCI objectives, including the Biomass Working Group, Sierra Cascade Dialogue, and the Interagency Forest Working Group.

### **Regional Water**

This project will continue relationship-building activities to establish the SNC as an accepted and trusted resource among local/state/federal agencies, decision-makers and stakeholders. Several actions will be undertaken as part of this project:

- Coordinating Regional input and engagement in the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) Water Plan Update 2013 (including serving as lead author for the Mountain Counties Overlay Regional Report).
- Providing input on Sierra issues and interests in the draft Delta Plan.
- Coordinating efforts to retain Regional funding in the 2012 water bond and/or other funding mechanisms.
- Supporting Sierra-based Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) groups to enable them to compete more successfully for DWR planning and implementation funds.

### **Regional Agricultural and Ranching**

Under this new initiative, the SNC will focus on assessing the needs of farmers and ranchers in the Region and taking action to the extent feasible to address these needs. Specific actions will include:

- Implementing the 2012-13 Grant program, which will focus on high benefit projects that help to preserve ranches and agricultural lands in the Region.
- Assessing the gaps in research and information and determining how to work collaboratively with other organizations to address these needs and gaps.
- Facilitating discussions on key issues in an effort to reach consensus, for example, livestock grazing on federal lands (Kern Plateau).

### **Geotourism**

The SNC will continue to coordinate with the Sierra Business Council, National Geographic and numerous local partners to add authentic content to the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project website and to draw more visitors to the site. Actions to be undertaken by June 2013 include:

- Completing California Historical Landmark and Watchable Wildlife destination pages.
- Distributing 100,000 printed MapGuides.
- Making a free down-loadable mobile phone application available to the public through existing application stores.
- Implementing a marketing plan aimed at increasing the amount of web traffic visiting the site on a monthly basis.
- Completing a study to assess website impact and response in communities.

- Continuing to participate in the National Geocouncil with seven other U.S. Geotourism projects to leverage marketing and advertising opportunities across the country.

### **Ecosystem Services**

The SNC will work with partners to undertake a number of actions under this initiative which will quantify environmental benefits in the upper watershed:

- Coordinating the completion of Phase 1 of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis, which will analyze how upper watershed restoration treatments, primarily fuel hazard reduction and forest health management, will benefit downstream beneficiaries and reduce operational costs of energy and water delivery agencies.
- Assisting in convening key parties to discuss findings and conclusions from this analysis and determining next steps.
- Supporting at least one other effort in the Sierra to quantify the water yield and movement benefits of restoring the forests and watersheds to ecological health.

### **Education and Communications**

The SNC will identify key audiences, update messages and develop informational materials and tools to more effectively engage policy-makers, decision-makers and stakeholders in the SNC's key initiatives. The outreach will focus primarily on the links between clean and reliable water, healthy forests and sustainable rural communities.

Actions will include the following:

- Meeting with key legislators/staff and key stakeholder groups regarding SNC initiatives.
- Developing targeted messages and outreach materials geared specifically for the water bond, SNFCI, Geotourism and Regional Agriculture and Ranching initiatives.
- Creating and distributing the FY 2011-12 Annual Report.
- Completing a plan for making more effective use of the SNC Web site as a communications vehicle.

### **Funding Development**

The SNC will focus its fund development efforts on three primary actions between now and June 2013:

- Continuing to track and publicize funding opportunities for the SNC and Regional stakeholders through the Current Funding Opportunities (CFO) newsletter.
- Implementing portions of the funding plan being developed for the SNC by consultants under contract.
- Providing grant writing assistance for projects developed by partners as part of a major initiative, such as SNFCI, Regional Water, Great Sierra River Cleanup, etc.

### **Great Sierra River Cleanup**

The SNC will coordinate the 4th Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup on September 15, 2012. In 2011, nearly 4,000 volunteers joined together to remove approximately 251 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 (Stewardship Council)**

The SNC will work with the Stewardship Council to take the actions necessary to carry out duties outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (including amendments mutually agreed upon). Specific actions will include the following:

- Executing agreements to accept covenants on lands donated to the U.S. Forest Service.
- Finalizing agreements for SNC to carry out certain duties upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council, including selection of replacement conservation easement holders and performing monitoring activities.
- Establishing a funding mechanism to compensate the SNC for tasks performed as described in MOU and subsequent agreements.

### **Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery**

The SNC will continue to coordinate and facilitate discussions and planning with the California Department of Fish and Game, Inyo County, the Friends of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and other stakeholders to develop a long term master plan for the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and surrounding property. Several specific actions will be undertaken under the project, including:

- Convening a workgroup to develop a process for exploring potential uses, ownership and management of the property.
- Developing a master plan for the property to guide decision-making.
- Identifying additional stakeholders to engage in the process.
- Effectuating the transfer of property, if deemed necessary and appropriate.
- Determining what, if any, role is appropriate for the SNC in the ultimate disposition of the property and ongoing management.

### **Sierra Nevada System Indicators**

The SNC will continue the development of indicators that will be used by the SNC staff and Board, and externally by SNC partners and other interested parties to promote

Regional understanding, make sound investments, guide strategic decision-making, and help us to gauge the results of our efforts. Specific action under the project will involve:

- Publishing, following Board approval, the last three in a series of five reports that present the data and analysis associated with nineteen Sierra Nevada System Indicators.

### **Internal Operations**

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

- Developing a department-wide training plan that will identify training needs and include mechanisms that will track staff training assignment and completion.
- Continuing implementation of IT system improvements including conversion to the State website template, full deployment of SNC's content management software (Plone), web maintenance server upgrades, improved field office service, and improved IT policies and procedures.
- Assessing and strengthening the development and use of its SharePoint-based intranet sites and tools.
- Improving emergency preparedness and safety through additional training, table top exercises and drills.

### **Background**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was allocated \$54 million in Proposition 84, passed by the voters in 2006. Approximately \$50 million of this amount was available for grant awards to eligible nonprofit organizations, public agencies and federally recognized tribal organizations. To date approximately \$40 million has been awarded to a variety of projects consistent with Proposition 84's requirements and SNC's governing statute.

At its September 2011 meeting, the Board approved Grant Guidelines for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-12 grant cycle to support Healthy Forests as identified in the SNC's Strategic Plan. For the purposes of this grant program, Healthy Forests activities include projects that are designed to preserve or improve Sierra Nevada conifer and mixed conifer forest health by reducing the risk and impacts of large, damaging fires and/or preserving or restoring ecosystem function in forests and meadows.

SNC originally estimated that approximately \$5 million would be available to fund grants from Proposition 84 to support this area of focus, and an equal amount would be allocated in the next grant cycle for FY 2012-13 to support Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands as defined in SNC's Strategic Plan. As indicated at the December meeting, some additional funds will be available to augment original program amounts. A recommendation for how to allocate additional funds is discussed in the "Current Status" section below.

SNC received 196 pre-applications by the October 21 deadline, representing more than \$25 million in requests from 122 organizations. Of the 196 pre-applications received, 134 were for site improvement projects, while 62 were for pre-project activities. Pre-applications were received from every Subregion.

### **Current Status**

As the initial round of grants authorized by the SNC in 2007-08 are closing-out, it is clear that additional unused funds from some of those grants will be available for the SNC to reallocate and increase the available funds for Healthy Forests and Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands grant programs. SNC estimates up to an additional \$2 million will be available to augment the remaining grant rounds (it is likely this number will grow somewhat as project closeouts continue and funds are not fully utilized). Staff consulted with the Board committee established in anticipation of this issue and is recommending that the Board approve an additional \$2 million for the current grant cycle, increasing the total available to approximately \$7 million.

SNC received 122 full applications by the January 23 deadline requesting a total of \$17.2 million. This included 80 applications for \$14.5 million for Category 1 projects and 42 applications for \$2.7 million for Category 2 projects. As a reminder, Category 1 projects are "on the ground projects" and Category 2 projects are pre-project activities necessary to implement Category 1 projects in the future. Applications were received

from all SNC Subregions and a broad range of applicant types. The total number of applications received represents approximately 66 percent of the 183 invitations issued to submit full applications. Primary contributors to the reduced percentage are ongoing difficulties for many applicants in completing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements prior to submitting applications. SNC staff will continue to explore alternate approaches to reduce these difficulties in future grant rounds.

Because of the workload associated with accurately and fairly evaluating such a large volume of applications staff is concerned that it may not have sufficient time to complete all evaluations before the scheduled June Board meeting. Staff has consulted with the Board committee on this issue and is recommending that the Board authorize staff to prioritize evaluation of Category 1 applications, so that those projects can be brought forward on schedule, allowing for on the ground work to occur during next year's work season. If this approach is approved by the Board, and the evaluation process for all applications is not completed in time for the June meeting, approximately \$5 million of Category 1 projects will be recommended to the Board at the June meeting and approximately \$2 million of the highest ranked remaining projects will be recommended to the Board at the September meeting.

#### **Next Steps**

SNC staff and expert evaluation panel will be reviewing all applications to present a final recommendation for consideration by the Board. All CEQA and related environmental review documentation, as well as any appraisals received, will also be reviewed and analyzed. Staff recommends that Board Subregional committees be established to consult with staff on recommendations upon completion of evaluation, as follows:

North Subregion: Brian Dahle and Todd Ferrara  
North Central Subregion: Bill Nunes and Bob Kirkwood  
Central Subregion: Ted Owens and BJ Kirwan  
South Central Subregion: Lee Stetson and John Brissenden  
South Subregion: Tom Wheeler and Bob Johnston  
East Subregion: Linda Arcularius and Bob Kirkwood

In addition, all mandated notifications to local governments, and water agencies and purveyors will be completed. Proposed recommendations will be posted with the SNC's publicly noticed agenda on or about May 23, 2012, for consideration at the June 7, 2012, Board meeting to be held in Bishop, CA. A similar process will be followed for the September Board meeting, if necessary.

**Recommendation**

**Staff recommends the following actions: approval of increasing the funds available for the 2011-12 Healthy Forests Grant Program by approximately \$2 million; authorization staff to prioritize evaluation of Healthy Forests Category 1 applications to prepare grant recommendations for Board consideration in June, and to bring remaining recommendations to the Board in September (if necessary to provide adequate time for evaluation); and, establishment of Board Subregional committees to consult with staff on recommendations.**

### **Background**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) launched its first round of grant-making in Fiscal Year (FY) 2007-08 using \$54 million allocated to it through Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coast Protection Bond Act of 2006. Since the beginning of the program, the SNC Board has authorized 221 grants totaling approximately \$40 million. Currently, applications submitted for the Healthy Forest focus area grant solicitation cycle are being evaluated and recommendations will be brought to the Board for authorization at its June meeting. As directed by the Board at the June 2010 meeting, the remaining approximately \$5 million (this number could be subject to change) will be allocated to SNC's final FY 2012-13 grant cycle which will focus on the Preservation of Ranching and Agricultural Lands.

### **Current Status**

The SNC Staff has been actively participating in the planning and implementation of the Preservation of Ranching and Agricultural Lands grant cycle for FY 2012-13. In developing the draft Grant Guidelines for this cycle, outreach efforts have been undertaken to solicit ideas and information from various stakeholder groups throughout the Sierra Nevada Region.

Attendees at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Rangeland Conservation Coalition Summit in January were invited to participate in a facilitated discussion about the upcoming grants program. Several teleconference webinars were held to elicit additional information from entities that are directly involved with ranching and farming including County Agriculture Commissioners, the Farm Bureau, California Cattlemen's Association, UC Extension, Sierra based Land Trusts, Resource Conservation Districts (RCD's), Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D's) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Focused follow-up meetings are now being scheduled to further explore and determine potential partnering opportunities with several of these entities and some additional organizations which have been identified through this outreach process.

Draft Guidelines will be available for public review from February 22 – April 6. The draft Guidelines reflect revisions being made relating to the new focus area, including this list of potentially eligible projects which may include, but is not limited to:

- Removal, replacement or improvement of structures, roads or stream barriers to reduce erosion, restore riparian integrity or provide for natural stream flow and stream structure.
- Fencing or other projects to manage grazing along riparian corridors or meadows to restore, stabilize, and/or revegetate where necessary, for the purpose of reducing erosion, improving habitat function, and/or improving water quality.
- Meadow restoration to improve habitat and hydrologic function.
- Removal of noxious weeds and restoration of native species in upland, riparian, wetland and aquatic ecosystems to promote natural ecosystem function.

- Protection of ranches and agricultural lands and associated watershed resources (streams, meadows, wetlands) through the use of conservation easements.

In addition, several substantive issues have been identified by staff that could result in changes to the Guidelines adopted for the FY 2011-12 grant cycle, including the following:

- ✓ California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)  
Meeting the requirements of CEQA continues to be confusing and challenging for many applicants. This is particularly true for federal agencies and nonprofit organizations, who cannot act as a lead agency for CEQA. Since the SNC is only able to act on those projects that are categorical exemptions, this makes it difficult for any projects requiring a higher level of environmental analysis. The FY 2012-13 draft Guidelines provide greater clarity on this issue and provide greater guidance for potential applicants (including a possible 30 day deadline extension if a pending CEQA action is imminent).
- ✓ Pre-applications  
A number of organizations submitted multiple pre-applications (a high of 8) during the current round. This resulted in a large number of pre-applications to be reviewed, although it was highly unlikely that any organization could prepare a full application for all pre-applications or that funding would be provided for multiple projects to one applicant. The draft Guidelines limit the number of pre-applications from a single entity to a maximum of three.

While a number of other changes have been included in the draft Guidelines, most are non-substantive in nature.

### **Next Steps**

Staff will make modifications to the draft Guidelines based on Board input and direction, as well as public comments, and bring the final proposed Grant Guidelines to the Board for consideration and approval at the June 7, 2012 meeting. Following Board action at the meeting, staff will finalize the 2012-13 Proposition 84 Grant Guidelines and application materials as necessary, continue outreach to potential applicants on the approved program, and launch the pre-application solicitation for FY 2012-13 grants later in June. It is anticipated that the Board will consider authorizations for this grant cycle at the March, 2013 Board meeting.

### **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.**



# **PROPOSITION 84 PRESERVATION OF RANCHES AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS GRANT PROGRAM**

**FUNDED BY THE  
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River  
and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006**

**DRAFT GRANT GUIDELINES  
Fiscal Year 2012-13**

**PUBLIC COMMENT DEADLINE  
APRIL 6, 2012**

*The Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California.*

[www.sierranevada.ca.gov](http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov)

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## I. Introduction

### A. Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a California state agency that initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California. The SNC provides state funding through its Proposition 84 Grants Program for local projects in partnership with eligible nonprofits, tribes, and public agencies.

California voters passed Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (the Act) on November 7, 2006. Proposition 84 added Section 75050 to the Public Resources Code (PRC), authorizing the State to issue bonds, and the Legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds, and associated land, water, and other natural resources. [Section 75050 \(j\)](#) of the PRC allocates \$54 million of these funds for SNC.

The Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act, enacted in 2004 and commencing with [PRC Section 33300](#), established the SNC, and Sections 33343 and 33346 set forth the authority for SNC to award grants of funds in order to carry out the purposes of the Act. The SNC has adopted Program Guidelines and has adopted its Strategic Plan in accordance with the Act; these documents provide general direction for SNC's activities and serve as the basis for these Grant Guidelines.

### B. Purpose of Grants Guidelines and Grants Application Packet

The Grant Guidelines establish the process used by the SNC to solicit applications, evaluate proposals, and authorize grants under the SNC Proposition 84 Grant Program. They also explain the scope of, and the requirements for, grant applications. A Glossary of Terms is provided in Appendix C.

**A Grant Application Packet (GAP) accompanies the Grant Guidelines, and includes information and forms needed for each category of grant applications. For applicants who want more information about the administrative requirements once a grant is authorized, sample grant agreements for each of the Proposition 84 project types are provided at: <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/sncgrants/managing-your-grant>.**

***NOTE: GAP not available at the time of this public comment period.***

## II. Grant Program Information

### A. Program Focus 2012-13

For Fiscal Year 2012-13, grant funds will be allocated to the Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands area of focus as defined in the SNC Strategic Plan as updated in September 2011. In order to be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC in 2012-13, all projects must meet **all** of the following criteria:

1. Maintain a direct focus on Ranches and Agricultural Lands and provide a clear public benefit (as described below).
2. Meet the [Public Resources Code 75050](#) (Proposition 84) mandate that awards go only to projects that protect and restore rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water, and other natural resources.
3. Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as described in [Appendix B](#).

Ranches and Agricultural Land activities, for the purposes of this grant program, include projects that support the long-term ecological values and economic viability of working rangelands and other agricultural lands and the health of their associated watersheds. Grants for Ranches and Agricultural Land projects will be allocated to two grant categories and will be awarded in one round.

For purposes of this grant program, projects on private property must demonstrate a public benefit (protection, restoration or improvement of natural resources) occurring beyond the private property in question. Examples include, but are not limited to, improvement in water quality or quantity, fish and wildlife habitat, and air quality. Applicants with questions regarding their project and the assessment of “public benefit” should contact SNC staff for more project-specific information.

### B. Grant Categories

Category One grants include site improvement/restoration projects and acquisition of conservation easements. Examples of potential Category One grant projects include, but are not limited to:

1. Removal, replacement or improvement of structures, roads or stream barriers to reduce erosion, restore riparian integrity or provide for natural stream flow and stream structure.
2. Fencing or other projects to manage grazing along riparian corridors or meadows to restore, stabilize, and/or revegetate where necessary, for the purpose of reducing erosion, improving habitat function, and/or improving water quality.
3. Meadow restoration to improve habitat and hydrologic function.

4. Removal of noxious weeds and restoration of native species in upland, riparian, wetland and aquatic ecosystems to promote natural ecosystem function.
5. Protection of ranches and agricultural lands and associated watershed resources (streams, meadows, wetlands) through the use of conservation easements.

Category Two grants are limited to pre-project activities that are necessary to prepare for implementation of a specific future on-the-ground Ranches and Agricultural Lands project that itself would meet the Category One requirements in these Guidelines.

Examples of Category Two grant projects include work such as:

1. Acquiring permits.
2. Completing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and/or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance.
3. Performing appraisals for conservation easement acquisitions.
4. Performing necessary studies and assessments, and developing necessary project designs related to a specific site or physical project.
5. Preparing plans or supplementing existing plans that will result in a specific project or a set of projects.

### **C. Ineligible Projects**

Examples of ineligible projects include:

1. Fee title acquisitions and associated planning activities.
2. Grants to service or repay bridge-loans.
3. Projects that consist solely of the purchase of equipment.
4. Projects that consist solely of maintenance activities.
5. Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, any law or regulation.
6. Education, outreach, or event-related projects, unless these are an incidental part of a larger project that is eligible for SNC grant funds.
7. Projects to implement required mitigation measures unless they are included as a part of the overall implementation of a project eligible for SNC grant funds.
8. Projects that are conducted on private lands that do not demonstrate a clear public benefit.

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis during the pre-application phase and to the extent necessary during the evaluation phase of the application process. All questions related to the eligibility of a project should be referred to SNC staff as soon as possible.

## D. Eligible Applicants

Grant funds may be authorized for:

1. Public agencies (any city, county, district, or joint powers authority; state agency; public university; or federal agency).  
Qualifying nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. "Nonprofit organization" A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in Public Resources Code Section 33300 et seq.
2. Eligible tribal organizations (includes any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians and is identified on pages 9250-9255, inclusive, of Document 95-3839 (February 16, 1995) of the Federal Register, as that list may be updated or amended from time to time).

**NOTE:** As a general rule, organizations or individuals performing non-grant-related work for the SNC under contract are ineligible to apply for a grant from the SNC during the life of the contract. This policy applies to organizations that:

1. Contract directly with the SNC.
2. Are providing services as a subcontractor to an individual or organization contracting directly with the SNC.
3. Employ an individual, on an ongoing basis, who is performing work for the SNC under a contract whether as the primary contractor or as a subcontractor.

Potential applicants who have a contract with or are doing work under a subcontract for the SNC and are contemplating applying for a grant should consult with SNC staff to determine limitations on eligibility.

## E. Process

**All applicants are required to comply with the SNC's pre-application process.** Pre-applications will be evaluated to confirm applicant and project eligibility, including relevance to the Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Land focus area. SNC program staff will be available to provide assistance in the development of a pre-application.

Full applications will be reviewed by a panel consisting of technical experts and SNC staff. Site visits may be requested as part of the evaluation process. Applications will be awarded points in accordance with the evaluation criteria described in [Section IV](#) of these Guidelines.

Geographic distribution of projects will be considered in determining project awards; however, unlike previous grant cycles, funding will be awarded without a specific or guaranteed allocation by Subregion.

#### **F. Consultation and Cooperation with Local Agencies**

In compliance with the SNC's governing statute, local government agencies, such as counties, cities and local water districts, are notified of eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area.

For all applications under consideration, SNC staff will notify the county and/or city affected and public water agency (when appropriate), and request comments within 15 business days following notification. The SNC will make all reasonable efforts to address concerns raised by local governments. The individual SNC Boardmembers representing each geographic Subregion within the SNC boundary will also be notified and may wish to communicate with the affected entities as well.

If an applicant has a project-specific resolution of support from the affected city and/or county or water agency, it should be included in the application package in order to facilitate the overall assessment process.

#### **G. Grant Provisions**

For each awarded grant the SNC develops an individual grant agreement with detailed provisions and requirements specific to that project. Please be aware that if authorized to receive a grant from the SNC, the provisions listed below will also apply:

1. Actual awards are conditional upon funds being available from the State.
2. Grant-eligible costs may be incurred by the grantee only after the grantee has entered into a fully executed agreement with the SNC; only these costs will be eligible for reimbursement.
3. Per the grant agreement, grantees must be prepared to maintain a level of documentation that will satisfy State auditing requirements to support the claim of eligible costs.

A sample grant agreement that specifies these requirements can be found on the SNC Web site at <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/other-assistance/managing-your-grant>. The SNC will provide assistance to the grantee to ensure the grantee's clear understanding and interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grant.

### **III. Applying for a Grant**

**Note: See Grant Application Packet (GAP) for required forms and additional application information.**

## **A. Pre-Application Requirement**

Applicants are required to complete and submit a pre-application form to SNC by the date posted on the SNC Web site. All pre-application information and forms will be available on the SNC Web site. Any pre-application that is submitted after the deadline will not be eligible for an invitation to submit a full application. The following basic project information is required in the pre-application:

1. Grant application type.
2. Project name.
3. Applicant name and address.
4. Applicant type.
5. Applicant's authorized representative.
6. Person with day-to-day responsibility for management of the grant, if awarded.
7. Project description.
8. Funding and budget information.
9. Project location, including latitude and longitude.
10. Status of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance (for federal applicants, National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] status will also need to be provided).
11. For projects occurring on private land, the resulting public benefit.
12. Type and status of land tenure for the project (site improvement projects only).
13. Appraisal status (conservation easement acquisition projects only).
14. Articles of incorporation, IRS letter, and bylaws (nonprofit organizations only).

## **B. Use of Pre-Application**

Pre-application information, as described in Section A, will be evaluated to confirm applicant and project eligibility. Eligible applicants whose projects comply with the Proposition 84, SNC mission and program areas, and focus area criteria will receive an invitation to submit a full application. Pre-applications will also need to demonstrate that the applicant is fully aware of and has a specific plan to comply with CEQA requirements. SNC program staff will be available to provide assistance to invited applicants in developing the elements of a full application. Applicants invited to submit full applications will not need to resubmit pre-application information.

## **C. Multiple Pre-Applications**

An individual entity will be limited to submitting no more than three project pre-applications. Multiple projects may not be submitted on a single pre-application. Applicants should consult with SNC program staff on any questions related to submission of multiple pre-applications.

#### **D. Project Location**

Project eligibility, including geographic eligibility, will be assessed during the pre-application phase of this grant solicitation process. Generally, funds must be expended within the statutory boundaries of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for a project to be eligible. Certain types of projects which involve implementation outside the boundaries of the Region may also be eligible if they meet all guideline requirements of the SNC and have a direct benefit to the Region. These might include physical projects located just outside the boundary which result in tangible benefits to resources within the boundaries of the SNC. Applicants should consult with SNC staff when such projects are being considered. See [Appendix A](#) or <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/maps/snc-region> for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's boundaries.

#### **E. General Information**

Applicants who have received an invitation to submit a full application will be able to find all needed materials and forms on the SNC Web site or from any SNC office by request. All full application materials are due and must be either delivered to the SNC headquarters office in Auburn by 5:00 PM on the application due date or postmarked no later than the due date. Any full application that is delivered or postmarked after the deadline will not be considered for evaluation. Files must be delivered in the format specified in the Grant Application Packet (GAP). Applications that are deemed incomplete or ineligible may not be processed or evaluated by the SNC.

#### **F. Category One: Site Improvement/Restoration or Conservation Easement Acquisition**

##### **1. Overview**

As described earlier in this document, only site improvement and/or restoration projects and conservation easement acquisitions in the SNC's stated Ranches and Agricultural Lands focus area will be eligible for grant awards in the 2012-13 Category One grant round. The funding range for individual Category One grants is \$5,000 to \$350,000.

Examples of potential Category One grant projects include, but are not limited to:

- Removal, replacement or improvement of structures, roads or stream barriers to reduce erosion, restore riparian integrity or provide for natural stream flow and stream structure.
- Fencing or other projects to manage grazing along riparian corridors or meadows to restore, stabilize, and/or revegetate where necessary, for the purpose of reducing erosion, improving habitat function, and/or improving water quality.

- Meadow restoration to improve habitat and hydrologic function.
- Removal of noxious weeds and restoration of native species in upland, riparian, wetland and aquatic ecosystems to promote natural ecosystem function.
- Protection of ranches and agricultural lands and associated watershed resources (streams, meadows, wetlands) through the use of conservation easements.

## 2. Site Improvement Requirements

- All pre-applications, including those for projects to be implemented on federal and tribal lands, are required to address how CEQA compliance will be achieved. (See [Section III H](#) on Environmental Documentation for more information).
- All full applications are required to identify and state progress and projected dates of completion for all permits necessary to complete the project.
- Full applications must include site and topographic maps, as well as site photos.
- Land Tenure:  
Applicants must submit documentation to the SNC showing that they have adequate tenure to, and site control of, the properties to be improved or restored<sup>1</sup>. Proof of adequate land tenure includes, but is not necessarily limited to:
  - Fee title ownership.
  - An easement or license agreement, sufficient for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.
  - Other agreement between the applicant and the fee title owner, or the owner of an easement on the property, sufficient to give the applicant adequate site control for the purposes of the project.

For projects involving multiple landowners, all landowners or an appointed designee must provide written permission to complete the project.

- Land Tenure Requirements: Alternate Process  
When an applicant does not have tenure at the time of application, but intends to establish tenure via an agreement that will be signed upon grant authorization, the applicant must follow the alternate land tenure process by submitting a template copy of the proposed agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or permission form at the time of application. Once a project has been authorized for funding by the SNC Board, the applicant must submit documentation of land tenure before a complete grant agreement can be executed. Applicants are encouraged to submit

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<sup>1</sup> Adequate site control is the power or authority to conduct activities that are necessary for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.

this information in an expeditious manner. If this information is not provided within 90 days of Board authorization, the SNC may choose not to fund the project.

### **3. Conservation Easement Acquisition Requirements**

The SNC will accept applications to acquire conservation easements (fee title acquisitions are not eligible for grant funding in this cycle).

- Any conservation easement acquisitions must be from willing sellers.
- The terms under which the conservation easement is acquired shall be subject to the SNC's approval.
- All interests to be acquired must be in perpetuity.
- A grant application to acquire a conservation easement is required to specify all of the following:
  - The intended use and past use of the property;
  - The manner in which the land will be managed; and,
  - How the cost of ongoing management will be funded.
- Applications are required to include a recent appraisal (two paper copies and an electronic version [CD]); see [Appendix F](#) for applicable requirements according to California State appraisal regulations. All appraisals will be reviewed by the California Department of General Services. Appraisals are requested at the time of full application submittal, but applicants will have 60 days from the application due date to provide the SNC with a completed appraisal. Any applicant taking advantage of this delay does so at his/her own risk, as the SNC cannot guarantee that necessary reviews will be conducted in time to meet the Board schedule.
- If the project applicant intends to transfer the responsibility for the project to a third party in the future, the application must so indicate and, if known, must also identify the third party and include evidence that the third party is aware, willing, qualified and capable of assuming the long-term management of the project. The SNC must approve such transfer prior to it occurring.
- The SNC may require applicants to provide a Phase I or Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (toxics report) on any property proposed for conservation easement acquisition, if there is reason to believe the site may have toxic contamination. Applicants should consult with SNC staff to determine if this requirement is applicable.

### **G. Category Two: Pre-Project Grants**

Category Two grants are limited to pre-project activities that are necessary to prepare for a specific future on-the-ground project that meets the SNC grant program criteria. In other words, Category Two grants encompass pre-project activities for the types of projects that would be eligible for a Category One

grant according to these Guidelines. The maximum amount for individual Category Two grants is \$75,000.

Examples of Category Two grants include work such as:

1. Acquiring permits.
2. Completing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance.
3. Performing appraisals for conservation easement acquisitions.
4. Performing necessary studies and assessments, and developing necessary project designs related to a specific site or physical project.
5. Preparing plans or supplementing existing plans that will result in a specific project or a set of projects.

## H. Environmental Documents

The SNC must comply with The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) when it authorizes grants. The SNC will act as the CEQA Lead Agency **only** for a project which qualifies for an exemption from CEQA, but **not** for those projects requiring a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

At the time of application submission, the applicant is responsible for providing an adopted EIR, Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration or Notice of Exemption, if a public agency has acted to provide CEQA compliance. If the EIR, Negative Declaration, or Mitigated Negative Declaration will be adopted by another public agency within 30 days of application submission, consult with SNC staff to determine if an extension can be granted. However, under no circumstance will the SNC accept one of the above CEQA compliance documents more than 30 days after the application deadline.

The type, cost, timing, and amount of documentation needed to satisfy CEQA requirements can vary greatly depending on the type and scope of the proposed project and the type of applicant. [Appendix E](#) describes the requirements for CEQA compliance for this grant program. Applicants are **strongly encouraged** to consult with SNC staff during the pre-application period as CEQA compliance can require a significant amount of time to complete and affect your ability to complete a full application.

## I. Projects with Uncertain Treatment Area

If a project's geographic area or deliverables cannot be fully determined at the time of application because the applicant is trying to maximize treatment, the grant application must indicate the minimum and maximum numerical objective (deliverables) that the project will likely achieve. Examples of these types of projects include, but are not limited to, vegetation clearing activities, revegetation projects, or invasive plant removal projects. Environmental review documentation for these projects must cover the maximum area proposed.

## **J. Eligible Costs**

Only direct project costs for items within the scope of the project and within the time frame of the project agreement are eligible for payment. Costs related to project-specific performance measures and reporting are required to be addressed in the project budget.

As a part of a site improvement project, costs of monitoring activities to establish pre- and post-project conditions such as, but not limited to, biological, chemical, or physical tests to monitor or evaluate a project's efficacy are eligible.

Eligible administrative costs must be directly related to the project and may not exceed 15 percent of the project implementation cost. Grantees with projects that are funded from multiple grants must develop and apply an administrative cost allocation methodology in identifying eligible administrative costs within each grant. SNC staff is available to provide assistance in determining eligible administrative costs.

The purchase of equipment as a part of a grant may have limitations and requirements; grantees interested in purchasing equipment with grant funds should consult with SNC staff during application development.

## **K. Ineligible Costs**

Indirect expenditures billed as a percentage of implementation costs are not eligible for reimbursement. These are expenses that involve ongoing operations, or repair or maintenance costs, regardless of whether the repair or maintenance may last more than one year.

Proposition 84 funds may not be used to service or retire debt previously incurred by an eligible applicant in connection with the applicant's acquisition of a real property interest.

In addition, grant funding may not be used to establish or increase a legal defense fund or endowment, make a monetary donation to other organizations, or pay for food or refreshments.

If ineligible costs are included in the project budget, they could result in the project being deemed ineligible in total. In some cases, the project may be approved for funding with the total amount of the award reduced by the amount of the ineligible costs. In that event, SNC will contact the applicant to confirm that the project is still viable. Applicants should avoid including ineligible costs in the application and should contact SNC staff with questions.

## **L. Performance Measures and Reporting**

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and

desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to the SNC achieving its programmatic goals.

Applicants must propose project-specific performance measures at the time of full application submittal. Detailed information and recommended performance measures can be found in [Appendix D](#) of this document. Applicants may also propose alternative performance measures, which will be subject to the approval of SNC staff if the grant is authorized. The proposed measure(s) will be finalized in consultation with SNC staff prior to grant agreement approval. Please refer to the Evaluation Criteria, Section IV, for further description of how performance measures will be considered as part of the application.

All grantees will be required to provide periodic progress reports and a final report. The final report must include data related to the project performance measures. See <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/other-assistance/managing-your-grant> for additional information on the required content of these reports.

#### **M. Audits**

Applicants should be aware that under the grant agreement, all expenditures claimed in carrying out the project remain subject to audit by the State of California for three years after the final payment or anytime during the conduct of the agreement. Potential applicants should note that during that timeframe they are expected to maintain detailed records necessary to support funding claims and to make them available upon request at all reasonable times for inspection, examination, monitoring, copying, excerpting, transcribing, and audit.

#### **IV. Ranches and Agricultural Lands Grant Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria to determine which projects are consistent with the requirements of Proposition 84, and also provide the greatest contribution to achieving the protection and sustainability of ranches and agricultural lands while supporting the Program Goals and mission of the SNC. Additional criteria used to evaluate applications include: project quality and readiness, cooperation and community support, long-term maintenance and sustainability, and project category preference.

Full applications must include a complete, clear and concise description of all project activities. The description must also include detail on the project's location, purpose, goals, outcomes, design or methodology, staffing, and costs. Applications will be awarded points as described below. The maximum number of points possible for each application is 100.

## **A. Proposition 84 Land and Water Benefits and SNC Program Goals and Mission (Maximum 40 points)**

Evaluators will be looking for project descriptions that clearly explain the goals, purpose, activities and outcomes of the project to assist in an evaluation of the following two areas, with a maximum of 40 points available:

### **1. Consistency with the Goals of Proposition 84 (Maximum of 20 points)**

Evaluators will consider how the project will contribute to the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds, and associated land, water, and other natural resources.

### **2. SNC Program Goals and Mission (Maximum of 20 points)**

Evaluators will consider how well the project aligns with the SNC's mission and program areas (listed in [Appendix B](#)). Projects will be evaluated based on their contribution to the preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands in the Sierra Nevada Region, as defined in these Guidelines. Projects that provide substantive benefits across multiple program areas, as well as address the SNC's "triple bottom line" of environmental, economic, and social well-being, will receive a higher score.

## **B. Project Quality and Readiness (Maximum of 45 points)**

Evaluators will consider whether the application exhibits a complete, realistic and attainable plan for success. Project Quality and Readiness will be evaluated in the areas listed below. Applicants should ensure they include information that clearly describes project outcomes that preserve ranches and agricultural lands and responds to the noted questions in each area.

### **1. Purpose, Goals, and Outcomes (Maximum of 25 points)**

- Does the project have clearly stated purpose, goals and outcomes?
- Does the applicant propose using identified best management practices and/or appropriate scientific information in achieving project deliverables?
- Is the project part of a larger plan? If so, how does it relate to the overall goals and deliverables?
- If the project includes removing materials from the land, such as biomass, is there an intended use or purpose for the materials?

Applicants should also consider the following:

- For stream enhancement and restoration projects, including grazing management and noxious weed removal, will the project contribute to one or more of the following: reduced erosion, restored riparian integrity, the promotion of natural ecosystem function, and water quality protection or improvement?

- For meadow restoration projects will the project contribute to improved habitat conditions, hydrologic function, or stream connectivity for fish and wildlife species?
- For conservation easements, will the project contribute to protecting against the threat of conversion to another use, the protection of natural resources, improved water quality or increased habitat connectivity?

Projects with activities on private lands will have to address the clear public benefit of these activities.

**2. Workplan and Schedule (Maximum of 5 points)**

- Does the workplan adequately describe the specific tasks and schedule needed to complete the project and achieve the stated outcome(s)?
- Is the workplan realistic and does it describe the specific roles of all partners involved in the project?

**3. Budget (Maximum of 5 points)**

- Are the budgeted amounts adequate and appropriate to achieve the stated outcomes?
- Is the applicant providing in-kind resources?
- Is it anticipated that activities performed under the grant will generate revenues? If so, how will the revenues be utilized to benefit the project?
- If funding other than SNC funding is needed for project completion, what is the status of other funding?

**4. Restrictions, technical documents, and agreements (Maximum of 5 points)**

- Are permits, agreements, and technical documents necessary for the implementation of this project? If so, are they in place? If not, is there a clear and feasible plan to secure them prior to project implementation?
- Are there property restrictions and/or encumbrances that could adversely impact project completion?

**5. Organizational Capacity (Maximum of 5 points)**

- Does the applicant possess the capacity to complete the project as proposed?
- Does the applicant, including current staff, have experience in completing similar projects?
- If appropriate, does the applicant have project partners and/or contractors with expertise necessary for project completion?
- If the applicant has entered into other grant agreements with the SNC, has the applicant performed in compliance with agreement requirements?

**C. Cooperation and Community Support (Maximum of 5 points)**

Evaluators will consider if the application demonstrates community support from a diverse range of stakeholders. Projects that were developed through a

collaborative group or a process that included public input will receive a higher score.

**D. Long-term Management and Sustainability (Maximum of 5 points)**

Evaluators will consider whether the application clearly describes how the long-term management of the project will be accomplished and financed. (Category Two projects should address this, to the extent feasible, as it relates to the future physical project that may result from the grant.)

**E. Project Category Prioritization (Maximum of 5 points)**

In scoring grants, the SNC will use the following prioritization methodology. Each application submitted will automatically be assigned a point value based on project type. Priority weighting is awarded to Category One restoration and site improvement projects over all other project types.

1. Site improvement projects (5 points).
2. Pre-project activities that ready on-the-ground site improvement projects (2 points).
3. Acquisition of conservation easements (1 point).
4. Pre-project due-diligence projects that ready the acquisition of conservation easements (0 points).

In addition to the technical evaluation, SNC staff will consider geographic distribution of proposed projects when developing recommendations for the SNC Board.

## APPENDIX A

### Program Geographic Area

Project must be located in, or partly in, the boundaries of the Sierra Nevada Region to be eligible. PRC Section 33302 (f) defines the Sierra Nevada Region as the area lying within the Counties of Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yuba, bounded as follows:

On the east by the eastern boundary of the State of California; the crest of the White/Inyo ranges; and State Routes 395 and 14 south of Olancho; on the south by State Route 58, Tehachapi Creek, and Caliente Creek; on the west by the line of 1,250 feet above sea level from Caliente Creek to the Kern/Tulare County line; the lower level of the western slope's blue oak woodland, from the Kern/Tulare County line to the Sacramento River near the mouth of Seven-Mile Creek north of Red Bluff; the Sacramento River from Seven-Mile Creek north to Cow Creek below Redding; Cow Creek, Little Cow Creek, Dry Creek, and the Shasta National Forest portion of Bear Mountain Road, between the Sacramento River and Shasta Lake; the Pit River Arm of Shasta Lake; the northerly boundary of the Pit River watershed; the southerly and easterly boundaries of Siskiyou County; and within Modoc County, the easterly boundary of the Klamath River watershed; and on the north by the northern boundary of the State of California; excluding both of the following:

- (1) The Lake Tahoe Region, as described in Section 66905.5 of the Government Code, where it is defined as "Region."
- (2) The San Joaquin River Parkway, as described in Section 32510.

See: <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/maps/snc-region> for a general map of the Region; however, applicants should contact staff to verify whether the project is located in an eligible area.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **SNC Mission**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California.

### **SNC Program Areas**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy was created as a state agency to do all of the following, working in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties:

1. Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation;
2. Protect, conserve, and restore the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources;
3. Aid in the preservation of working landscapes;
4. Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires;
5. Protect and improve water and air quality;
6. Assist the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program; and,
7. Undertake efforts to enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

## APPENDIX C

### Glossary of Terms

Unless otherwise stated, the terms used in the SNC Proposition 84 Grant Guidelines and Grant Application Packet shall have the following meanings:

Acquisition – To obtain ownership of permanent interest in real property through conservation easements. Leaseholds and rentals do not constitute Acquisition.

Administrative Costs – Administrative costs include any expense which does not relate directly to project implementation. Similar to the traditional definition of ‘overhead,’ administrative costs include rent, utilities, travel, per diem, office equipment and supplies, services such as internet and phone, etc.

Applicant – The entity applying for a SNC grant pursuant to these guidelines.

Application – The individual application form and its required attachments for grants pursuant to the SNC Program.

Appraisal - An estimate of the value of real property or other specific interest in real property.

Authorized Representative – The officer authorized in the Resolution to sign all required grant documents including, but not limited to, the grant agreement, the application form, and payment requests. The authorized representative may designate an alternate by informing SNC in writing.

Best Management Practice – A practice or combination of practices considered to be the most effective means (including technological, economic, and institutional considerations) of meeting a particular goal or achieving a particular end.

Biological /Other Survey – An evaluation or collection of data regarding the conditions in an area using surveys and other direct measurements.

Board – The Governing Board of the SNC as established by PRC Section 33321.

Bond or Bond Act – Proposition 84, The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Public Resources Code Section 75001 et seq.).

California Public Agency - Any state agency, board, or commission, any county, city and county, city, regional agency, public district, redevelopment agency, or other political subdivision.

Capital Improvement Projects – Projects that utilize grant funds for acquisition of conservation easements or site improvement/restoration.

CEQA – The California Environmental Quality Act as set forth in the Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq. CEQA is a law establishing policies and procedures that require agencies to identify, disclose to decision makers and the public, and attempt to lessen significant impacts to environmental and historical resources that may occur as a result of a proposed project to be undertaken, funded, or approved by a local or state agency. For more information, refer to: <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/>.

CEQA/NEPA Compliance – Activities a public agency performs to meet the requirements of CEQA or NEPA.

CEQA Lead Agency-The lead agency is the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project which may have a significant effect upon the environment. Under CEQA a public agency is any state agency, board, or commission, any county, city and county, city, regional agency, public district, redevelopment agency, or other political subdivision.

Collaborative Process – Willing cooperation between stakeholders with different interests to solve a problem or make decisions that cut across jurisdictional or other boundaries; often used when information is widely dispersed and no single individual, agency or group has sufficient resources to address the issue alone.

Condition Assessment – Characterization of the current state or condition of a particular resource.

Conifer Forest – Type of forest characterized by cone-bearing, needle-leaved trees, characteristic of much of the Sierra Nevada Region.

Conservancy – The Sierra Nevada Conservancy as defined in Public Resources Code Section 33302 (b).

Conservation Easement – Any limitation in a deed, will or other instrument in the form of an easement, restriction, covenant or condition which is or has been executed by or on behalf of the owner of the land subject to such limitation and is binding upon the successive owners of such land, and the purpose of which is to retain land predominantly in its natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, forested or open-space condition. (Civil Code Section 815.1)

Data – A body or collection of facts, statistics, or other items of information from which conclusions can be drawn.

Design/Permit – Preliminary project planning or identification of methodologies or processes to achieve project goals, and the process of obtaining any regulatory approvals or permits necessary from appropriate governmental agencies in order to conduct the work of the project.

Easement – An interest in land entitling the holder thereof to a limited use or enjoyment of the land in which the interest exists, or to restrict the use or enjoyment of the land by the owner of the fee title.

Eligible Costs – Expenses incurred by the grantee during the agreement performance period of an approved agreement, which may be reimbursed by the SNC.

Enhancement – Modification of a site to increase/improve the condition of streams, forests, habitat and other resources.

Environmental Site Assessment – Phase I, Phase II or other reports which identify potential or existing contamination liabilities on the underlying land or physical improvements of a real estate holding.

Executive Officer – Executive Officer of the SNC appointed by the Board, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 33328, to manage the Conservancy.

Fair Market Value – The value placed upon property as supported by an appraisal that has been reviewed and approved by the California Department of General Services or other authority designated by law or by the SNC.

Fee Title – The primary interest in land ownership that entitles the owner to use the property subject to any lesser interests in the land and consistent with applicable laws and ordinances.

Fiscal Sponsor – An organization that is eligible to receive SNC Proposition 84 grants and is willing to assume fiscal responsibility for a grant project, although another entity would carry out the grant scope of work.

Grant – Funds made available to a grantee for eligible costs during an agreement performance period.

Grant Agreement – An agreement between the SNC and the grantee specifying the payment of funds by the SNC for the performance of the project scope within the agreement performance period by the grantee.

Grant Agreement Performance Period – The period of time during which the eligible costs may be incurred under the grant, and in which the work described in the grant scope must be completed.

Grant Agreement Term – The period of time that includes the agreement performance period, plus time for all work to be billed and paid by the state. This period is the same as the beginning and ending dates of the agreement.

Grantee – An entity that has an agreement with the SNC for grant funds.

Grant Scope – Description of the items of work to be completed with grant funds as described in the application form and cost estimate.

Infrastructure Development/Improvement – The physical improvement of real property, including the construction of facilities or structures (such as bridges, trails, culverts, buildings, etc.).

In-kind Contributions– Non-monetary donations that are utilized on the project, including materials and services. These donations shall be eligible as “other sources of funds” when providing budgetary information for application purposes.

Land Tenure – Legal ownership or other rights in land, sufficient to allow a grantee to conduct activities that are necessary for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. Examples include: fee title ownership; an easement for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement; or agreements or a clearly defined process where the applicant has adequate site control for the purposes of the project.

Model/Map – Representations to visually show the organization, appearance or features of an area or subject.

Monitoring/Research – To search, observe or record an operation or condition with tools that have no effect upon the operation or condition.

Natural Resource Protection – Those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to rivers, lakes, and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water, and other natural resources, or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, restoration, preservation and education.

NEPA – The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. NEPA is a federal law requiring consideration of the potential environmental effects of proposed project whenever a federal agency has discretionary jurisdiction over some aspect of that project. For more information, refer to: <http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/index.html>

NEPA Lead Agency-The federal agency having responsibility for providing compliance with NEPA for a proposed project on federal lands.

Nonprofit Organization– A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in Public Resources Code Section 33300 et seq.

Other Sources of Funds – Cash or in-kind contributions necessary or used to complete the acquisition or site improvement/restoration project beyond the grant funds provided by this program.

Outreach Materials – Audio, visual and written materials developed to help explain a particular topic or subject.

Performance Measure – A quantitative measure used by the SNC to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes.

Plan – A document or process describing a set of actions to address specific needs or issues or create specific benefits.

Planning – The act or process of creating a plan.

Pre-Project Due Diligence – The analysis necessary to identify all aspects influencing a project and determine the risks associated with a project.

Preservation – Protection, rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands – Activities occurring on ranches and farms that result in sustainable economic, ecological, and social benefits to communities, people, and their environments.

Project – The work to be accomplished with grant funds.

Project Coordinator – An employee of the SNC who acts as a liaison with the applicants or grantees and administers grant funds, ensuring compliance with guidelines and the grant agreement.

Proposition 84 – See Bond.

Public Agencies – Any city, county, district, or other subdivision of the State, or joint powers authority; or State agency; public university; or federal agency.

Public Benefit – Benefits accruing to the general public, clarified in this document with regard to publicly-funded work on private lands. These types of projects must demonstrate benefits (protection, restoration, or improvement of natural resources) beyond the private property in question, in order to be accepted as eligible for potential grant awards.

Ranches and Agricultural Lands – Lands managed to produce goods and commodities from the natural environment (most commonly actively-managed farms and ranches). These lands often provide important contributions to habitat, biodiversity, water quality, air quality and open space that benefit everyone.

Region – The Sierra Nevada Region as defined in Public Resources Code Section 33302 (f).

Resilience – The ability of an ecosystem to regain structural and functional attributes that have suffered harm from stress or disturbance.

Region-wide – Providing benefits that affect the overall breadth of the SNC Region or multiple Subregions within the Region.

Resource Protection – Those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to natural, cultural, historical or archaeological resources, or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or resources, such as acquisition of conservation easements, development, restoration, preservation or interpretation.

Restoration – Activities that initiate, accelerate or return the components and processes of a damaged site to a previous historical state, a contemporary standard or a desired future condition including, but not limited to, projects for the control of erosion, the control and elimination of exotic species, fencing out threats to existing or restored natural resources, road elimination, and other plant and wildlife habitat improvement.

Revenue – Revenues generated from a project as the direct result of the provision of public funds, excluding funds provided to reimburse expenses.

Site Improvements – Project activities involving the physical improvement or restoration of land.

SNC – Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Stewardship Plan– A plan to provide ongoing implementation and management associated with the acquisition of a conservation easement or site improvement/restoration project.

Study/Report – Research or the detailed examination and analysis of a subject.

Total Cost – The amount of the Other Sources of Funds combined with the SNC grant request amount that is designated and necessary for the completion of a project.

Tribal Organization – An Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians and is identified on pages 9250-9255, inclusive, of Document 95-3839 (February 16, 1995) of the Federal Register, as that list may be updated or amended from time to time.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Performance Measures**

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to SNC achieving its programmatic goals.

All grantees are required to report on performance measures for their projects. Certain information will be asked of all projects. This includes data related to four quantitative performance measures if applicable to the project:

1. Number of People Reached
2. Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada
3. Number and Type of Jobs Created
4. Number of New, Improved or Preserved Economic Activities

In addition to the information that will be asked of all projects, grantees will report on performance measures (usually one to three) related to their specific project.

### **Submitting Performance Measures in the Grant Application**

You must propose project-specific measures as part of your grant application. Generally, you will select these measures from the pre-approved list developed by the SNC. However, you also have the option of proposing a different measure in your application if you believe it would be more appropriate for your project. Final Performance Measures will be determined in consultation with SNC staff, but it is highly recommended that the applicant work with SNC staff during the pre-application process to concur on the appropriate Performance Measures prior to application submission.

The Performance Measures you select should be directly applicable to your project's goals, outcomes, and deliverables. Approved measures become part of a grantee's final grant agreement.

The four Performance Measures listed above that are required of all projects should be addressed in the grant application as to if and how they are applicable to the project.

The applicant is not expected to conjecture the quantitative outcomes of the Performance Measures in the grant application, but merely to list and discuss their applicability.

### **Selecting Project-Specific Performance Measures**

1. You should begin the process of selecting project-specific performance measures by referring back to the project category you selected for your project.

The table on the following page provides a list of the recommended measures that are most likely to be relevant for projects in each category. A description of all of the measures follows the table. Examine your project purpose, goals, desired outcomes, and deliverables (from your project general description). Select measures that will help you determine whether and how well these have been achieved. (If you are unclear on which measure/s to select or have questions, please contact SNC staff.)

2. Review your project workplan and budget to ensure you have factored in the time and cost to gather and report performance measure-related information. For each Performance Measure, a detailed description of information gathering and reporting requirements is provided on the SNC website:  
<http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/sncgrants/managing-your-grant/detailed-performance-measure-descriptions>
3. You may find that the performance measures listed below are not relevant to your project. SNC encourages the development of performance measures most appropriate for your project. Development of new measures should be done in consultation with SNC staff, because it requires their approval. When proposing a new performance measure, keep in mind that the measure should directly relate to a specific project goal, outcome, or deliverable. Consider performance measures that can be tracked using accepted methods to ensure that your data will be consistent and defensible. For any new performance measures proposed for your project, provide the following information:
  1. Clear definition
  2. Data collection method(s)
  3. Data sources
  4. Target values

### **Reporting Performance Measures Outcomes in the Progress and Final Reports**

Grantees must report on all Performance Measures that are incorporated into the grant agreement in the Progress Reports (when interim measurement is applicable) and the Final Report, in accordance with the Detailed Performance Measures descriptions.

Grantees are also required to provide qualitative, or narrative, information in their final project reports as requested on the Final Report form.

**Performance Measures by Project Category  
All Grants**

<b>A. Common to All Categories</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of People Reached</li> <li>2. Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada</li> <li>3. Number and Type of Jobs Created</li> <li>4. Number of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities</li> </ol>
<b>B. Common to Site Improvement &amp; Acquisition Categories</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created</li> <li>6. Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected or Restored</li> <li>7. Number of New Recreation Access Points</li> <li>8. Number of Special Significance Sites Protected or Preserved</li> <li>9. Tons of Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided</li> <li>10. Measurable Changes in Knowledge or Behavior</li> </ol>
<b>C. Acquisition Only</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Acres of Land Conserved</li> </ol>
<b>D. Site Improvement Only</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Acre Feet of Water Supply Conserved or Enhanced</li> <li>13. Acres of Land Improved or Restored</li> <li>14. Acre Feet Per Annum of Streamflow Improved</li> <li>15. Feet of Trail/Path Length Constructed or Improved</li> <li>16. Mass of Pollutants Reduced Per Year</li> </ol>
<b>E. Pre-Project Planning</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments</li> <li>18. Percent of Pre-Project and Planning Efforts Resulting in Project Implementation</li> <li>19. Measurable Changes in Knowledge or Behavior</li> </ol>

**Performance Measure Descriptions**

The following Performance Measures (PMs) have been developed to meet SNC's initial needs as it launches its programs and provides initial grant funding for several project types. These PMs, along with a brief description of each, are listed below in five broad categories: Performance Measures for All Projects, Performance Measures Common to Site Improvement and Acquisition Projects, Performance Measures for Acquisition Projects, Performance Measures for Site Improvement Projects, and Performance Measures for Pre-Project Planning Projects.

**A. Common to All Categories**

**1. Number of People Reached**

Number of People Reached measures progress of information-sharing and education efforts and inclusiveness of other project efforts such as plan development.

**2. Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada**

The Dollar Value of Resources Leveraged provides a measure of the additional resources contributed to SNC funded projects by grantees and other partners. The total value is based on other funds provided by external sources, valuation of volunteer hours, and the value of in-kind contributions made by a project.

**3. Number and Type of Jobs Created**

Number and Type of Jobs Created provides an accounting of the full-time equivalent jobs created by SNC-funded activities. Information provided should describe whether the job is expected to be temporary or long-term.

**4. Number of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities**

New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities measures the types, quantities, and, where appropriate, estimated dollar values of new, improved, or preserved activities, products, and services resulting from the project.

**B. Common to Site Improvement and Acquisition Projects**

**5. Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity Maintained or Created**

The Kilowatts of Renewable Energy Production Capacity maintained or created is based on the California Energy Commission's (CEC's) standards for renewable energy eligibility and includes energy generation capacity from biomass, wind, solar, small hydroelectric and other qualifying sources.

**6. Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected or Restored**

Linear Feet of Stream Bank Protected or Restored provides a measure of a project's contribution to water quality, riparian property values, habitat, and stream connectivity. Information provided should indicate whether the stream bank is being protected or restored.

**7. Number of New Recreation Access Points**

Number of New Recreation Access Points measures improvements in recreation access by: type of access points, recreation type, and change in capacity.

**8. Number of Special Significance Sites Protected or Preserved**

Number of Special Significance Sites Protected or Preserved records the total number of sites with important cultural or natural features that are protected from development or other adverse impacts.

**9. Tons of Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided**

Tons of Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided demonstrates the value of Sierra ecosystem resources in reducing the effects of climate change. Potential project types can include conservation forest management, renewable energy generation, and industrial process improvements. The carbon reductions included in this performance measure will be informed by and linked, as appropriate, to standard approaches and protocols such as those published by the California

Climate Action Registry.

**10. Measurable Changes in Knowledge or Behavior**

Measurable Change in Knowledge or Behavior tracks the effects of educational and interpretive efforts to improve appreciation for and stewardship of Sierra Nevada resources. Examples of behavioral change include increased Firewise landscaping and removal of noxious weeds on private property. Examples of change in knowledge include improved student understanding of climate change and increased public acceptance of prescribed fire.

**C. Common to Acquisition Projects**

**11. Acres of Land Conserved**

Acres of Land Conserved includes areas that have been conserved through acquisition, including easements. This performance measure provides an accounting of the extent of landscape and natural resources conserved by SNC activities. Information provided should include the method of conservation (acquisition or easement) and the primary purpose of conservation (recreation, open space, working landscapes, etc).

**D. Common to Site Improvement Projects**

**12. Acre Feet of Water Supply Conserved or Enhanced**

Acre Feet of Water Supply Conserved or Enhanced measures the benefits of water conservation and efficiency projects and particular restoration efforts that impact timing of flows. These actions benefit both local residents and the people of California who receive their water supply from the Sierra Nevada. Project activities can include: meadow restoration to enhance runoff timing or incentive programs such as converting to drip irrigation to reduce demand.

**13. Acres of Land Improved or Restored**

Acres of Land Improved or Restored tracks efforts to reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as catastrophic wildfire, and improve natural resource conditions, such as site productivity and wildlife habitat, through site improvement. Information provided should identify whether the acres protected have been categorized by importance or priority rating through another agency or program, such as acres of critical habitat, or acres in moderate, high and very high fire hazard areas, as delineated by the CALFIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zoning Map.

**14. Acre-Feet per Annum of Streamflow Improved**

Acre-Feet per Annum of Streamflow Improved measures the changes in flow conditions in a given stream or river resulting from a project. This performance measure directly addresses improving water quality and habitat, since flow can be a controlling driver in these issues. Subcategories include: water conservation or efficiency projects dedicating conserved water to instream flows, actions that result

in changes in management, short-term leases of water for instream flows, and permanent transfers through acquisition of a water right.

**15. Feet of Trail/Path Length Constructed or Improved**

The Feet of Trail/Path Length Constructed or Improved incorporates paved and unpaved multi-use urban, hiking, OHV, equestrian and other trails and paths. Information provided should identify the length, type of trail/path and type of use.

**16. Mass of Pollutants Reduced Per Year**

The Mass of Pollutants Reduced Per Year indicates the pollutant reduction effectiveness of restoration, water quality, and air quality projects. Current projects focus on reducing sediment and mercury pollution; however, additional pollutants may be targeted in future projects. Information provided should identify the pollutant type/s to be reduced and the amount of reduction.

**E. Common to Pre-Project Planning Projects**

**17. Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments**

The Number of Collaboratively Developed Plans and Assessments is a measure that may be relevant for a wide variety of projects. Plans and assessments help communities plan for resource use, qualify for targeted funding, and support understanding of conditions and management options. Examples of anticipated subjects include fire protection, water resources, land use, tourism development, habitat surveys and many more.

**18. Percent of Pre-Project and Planning Efforts Resulting in Project Implementation**

Percent of Pre-project and Planning Efforts Implemented measures progress in moving SNC-funded projects from initial stages of collaboration and planning to on-the-ground actions and acquisitions.

**19. Measurable Changes in Knowledge or Behavior**

Measurable Change in Knowledge or Behavior tracks the effects of educational and interpretive efforts to improve appreciation for and stewardship of Sierra Nevada resources. Examples of behavioral change include increased Firewise landscaping and removal of noxious weeds on private property. Examples of change in knowledge include improved student understanding of climate change and increased public acceptance of prescribed fire.

## APPENDIX E

### California Environmental Quality Act Compliance

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a State agency, and SNC actions to approve grants are discretionary decisions subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). When the SNC is initiating or making discretionary decisions such as providing financial support to entities for grant projects, the SNC must ensure that it complies with CEQA, unless the action qualifies for an exemption from CEQA or is not a project as defined by CEQA. This CEQA requirement applies to all decisions to award funds to eligible grant applicants, including entities that are not California Public Agencies per CEQA, such as federal agencies, tribal agencies and organizations, and nonprofit (501(c)(3) organizations. Agencies or organizations that are not a California Public Agency do not have the authority to adopt or certify CEQA environmental documents.

The requirements for CEQA compliance will vary according to the proposed activities. ***As the necessary steps for CEQA compliance are determined project by project, and compliance can be a time consuming process, all applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with SNC staff during the pre-application process to determine how best to meet the CEQA requirements.***

The California Environmental Quality Act is the State of California's environmental review process. **Projects** are defined by CEQA as: The whole of an action that has potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. Specifically, related to the SNC grant program: A **Project** includes an activity which is funded, in whole or in part, through public agency contracts, **grants**, subsidies, loans, or other assistance from a public agency, such as the SNC.

Applicants should note that the CEQA Statutes and Guidelines were revised in 2011 to provide guidance to public agencies on how to address the issue of greenhouse gas emissions in draft CEQA documents. Along with all of the usual CEQA topic areas, this issue must be addressed, as applicable. For a revised CEQA Guidelines Initial Study Checklist, [click here](#). The SNC also encourages applicants to review the current provisions of CEQA, the statute, and the CEQA Guidelines, which are the regulations adopted by the Secretary for the Natural Resources Agency to implement CEQA. The statute and the Guidelines can be found on-line at <http://ceres.ca.gov/ceqa/>. Permitting requirements may be applicable to your proposed activities, and permitting processes may also be subject to CEQA review. The description below provides a broad overview of the level of CEQA for different project activities.

For activities that meet the CEQA definition of a Project, the CEQA environmental review process is completed by a California Public Agency acting as a CEQA Lead Agency (please see the Glossary). The Lead Agency is responsible for determining if

the proposed activity is a “Project” or is “Not a Project” for purposes of CEQA. If you are an applicant that is **not** a California Public Agency, contact your Project Lead to discuss what level of CEQA review and permits may be applicable to your project. The SNC will only act as a lead agency for grant projects in this grant cycle when the proposed activities are considered “Not a Project” per CEQA or the project qualifies for a CEQA exemption (either a Categorical Exemption or a statutory exemption). The SNC may act as a responsible agency (supporting agency) when a permit or other action subject to environmental review under CEQA requires another California Public Agency to act first as the lead agency under CEQA and to conduct environmental review resulting in the approval of a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or an Environmental Impact Report.

➤ **Not a Project under CEQA**

If the proposed activity does not meet the CEQA definition of a project, then review under CEQA would not be required. If you are a California Public Agency submitting the Pre-Application for an activity that is not a project under CEQA, then no CEQA documentation is required. If you are not a California Public Agency, you must coordinate with your project lead prior to pre-application submittal. The SNC or an appropriate CEQA lead agency will need to determine if your proposed activity is “Not a Project per CEQA.”

➤ **Categorical and Statutory Exemptions**

Specific types of activities have been identified as exempt from environmental analysis under CEQA; classes of Categorical Exemptions and Statutory Exemptions may be found in the CEQA Guidelines and the statute. If you are a California Public Agency submitting a Pre-Application, you are responsible for filing a Notice of Exemption for a categorically or statutorily exempt project. The Notice of Exemption must be submitted at the time of full application submittal, and it must be a signed and filed, stamped copy. If you are not a California Public Agency, provide all available environmental assessments or reports that have been conducted to date that support the finding of a Categorical or Statutory Exemption per CEQA. If a NEPA environmental analysis has been conducted, and the NEPA lead agency determined that the project qualifies for a Categorical Exclusion, provide the Categorical Exclusion with your Pre-Application. The Categorical Exclusion must be a signed copy, and it must be submitted at the time of full application submittal.

**For a proposed project that qualifies for a CEQA exemption and is seeking funds from the SNC, the SNC can act as the CEQA Lead Agency for applicants that are not California Public Agencies.** The SNC will file a Notice of Exemption for a project upon authorization by the SNC Board. If another agency has acted as the CEQA Lead Agency and filed a Notice of Exemption for the project, the applicant must provide a signed, filed, stamped copy of the Notice of Exemption/Categorical Exemption with full application submittal.

➤ **Negative Declaration and Mitigated Negative Declaration**

A CEQA Lead Agency is responsible for conducting an Initial Study for projects which are not categorically or statutorily exempt. If the Initial Study shows that a project will not have a significant impact on the environment, a Negative Declaration may be prepared and adopted by the CEQA Lead Agency. When impacts are identified that can clearly be reduced to a level of insignificance by adopted mitigation measures during project implementation, a Mitigated Negative Declaration may be prepared and adopted by the CEQA Lead Agency. The public notice, document preparation, and public review for these documents may require several months to complete. Documentation of completed CEQA review for proposed grant projects must be provided with the application.

**The SNC will NOT act as the CEQA Lead Agency for any project requiring a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report.** The applicant is responsible for providing an approved Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration from another CEQA Lead Agency analyzing potential impacts of the project. The CEQA Lead Agency must have discretionary authority to approve the environmental document, which means an agency must have jurisdiction by law over the activity (see CEQA §15366) that requires it to make a decision or issue an approval (see CEQA §15352), and to have discretion [not ministerial review] that allows it to condition its approval or change the project to protect the environment (see CEQA §15357).

➤ **Environmental Impact Report**

If the CEQA Lead Agency determines through an Initial Study that a project may result in a potentially significant impact to the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required. The public notice, document preparation, and public review for an EIR may take up to two years to complete. Documentation of completed CEQA review must be provided with application.

**The SNC will NOT act as the CEQA Lead Agency for any project requiring a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report.** The applicant is responsible for providing an approved Environmental Impact Report analyzing potential impacts of the project. The CEQA Lead Agency must have discretionary authority to approve the environmental document, which means an agency must have jurisdiction by law over the activity (see CEQA §15366) that requires it to make a decision or issue an approval (see CEQA §15352), and to have discretion [not ministerial review] that allows it to condition its approval or change the project to protect the environment (see CEQA §15357).

**Consistency with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

Projects that are located on Federally Managed Lands must comply with both NEPA and CEQA requirements. The project applicant is responsible for providing information, including NEPA documents, to the SNC that demonstrates that the project qualifies for an exemption from CEQA. If the federal agency has found that the project qualifies for

a categorical exclusion under NEPA, the signed Categorical Exclusion/Decision Notice must be submitted with the application. **The SNC will act as the CEQA Lead Agency only if the project qualifies for an exemption under CEQA.**

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Appraisals**

If a grant of funds is made to acquire an interest in real property the agreement between the SNC and the recipient will require all of the items listed below:

1. The transfer of an interest in the real property shall be subject to approval of the SNC, and a new agreement sufficient to protect the public interest shall be entered into between the SNC and the transferee.
2. The deed or instrument by which the grantee acquires an interest in real property under the grant shall include a power of termination on the part of the SNC. The deed or instrument shall provide that the SNC may exercise the power of termination by notice in the event of the grantee's violation of the purpose of the grant through breach of a material term or condition thereof, and that, upon recordation of the notice, full title to the interest in real property identified in the notice shall immediately vest in the SNC, or in another public agency or a nonprofit organization or tribal organization designated by the SNC to which the SNC conveys or has conveyed its interest.

### **REGULATIONS FOR THE SUBMITTAL OF APPRAISAL REPORTS TO THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE ACQUISITION OF CONSERVATION LANDS:**

Appraisal Reports prepared for the acquisition of any land or interest therein by or with funding from an "acquisition agency" as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5096.501 (a) must conform to the following minimum standards in order to be considered for Appraisal Review by the State.

1. Appraisal reports shall be prepared by, and include a signature by an appropriately Licensed or Certified Real Estate Appraiser in good standing. (Pursuant to Part 3, commencing with Section 11300 of Division 4 of the Business and Professions Code and the California Code of Regulations Section 3701.)
2. Appraisal reports shall include descriptive photographs and maps of sufficient quality and detail to clearly depict the subject property and any market data relied upon, including the relationship between the location of the subject property and the market data.
3. Appraisal reports shall include a complete description of the subject property land, site characteristics and improvements. Valuations based on a property's development potential shall include:
  - Verifiable data on the development potential of the land (e.g. Certificate of Compliance, Tentative Map, Parcel Map, Final Map).
  - A description of what would be required for a development project to proceed.

Appraisal reports shall include a statement by the appraiser indicating to what extent land title conditions were investigated and considered in the analysis and value conclusion.

Appraisal reports shall include a discussion of implied dedication, prescriptive rights or other unrecorded rights (Civil Code Sec. 801-813, 1006-1009) that may affect value. Indicating the extent of the investigation, any knowledge of, or observation of conditions that might indicate evidence of public use.

Appraisal Reports, or portions thereof, concluding other than nominal value for specialty interest, including but not limited to timber, minerals, or carbon credits, shall be prepared and signed by a certified or registered professional qualified in the field of specialty interest.

## **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES (DGS) APPRAISAL SPECIFICATIONS**

All appraisals must be completed and signed by a State of California Certified Real Estate Appraiser who certifies that the appraisal is in compliance with the [Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice](#) as currently adopted by the Appraisal Standards Board of the Appraisal Foundation.

### **Background**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) launched the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) over one year ago. This initiative fosters local and Regional collaboration to support a cohesive, economically viable, and sustainable approach to reducing fire risk, creating jobs, and protecting our valuable forest and watershed resources. SNC staff work closely with the diverse participants of regional, statewide and local collaboratives, including local governments, environmentalists, community and economic development representatives, to help achieve these goals.

The SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council focuses on regional and statewide issues that can influence the achievement of the objectives of the Initiative. The Coordinating Council also serves as a forum for issues arising in local forest collaborative efforts to be discussed and addressed. SNC Boardmember Bill Nunes and former Boardmember Steve Wilensky co-chair the Coordinating Council, and Boardmember Bob Kirkwood along with Boardmember Nunes are serving as the Board liaisons to the Initiative. Other members include representatives from the woods products industry, local government, environmental and conservation organizations, community groups and water interests. The primary federal land managers, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS), participate in an advisory role.

### **Current Status**

The fifth SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council meeting was held in January 2012. The primary focus of the meeting was coordinating with the USFS to draft the implementation plan for the Region's "Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration" and starting to outline projects that can demonstrate the implementation plan on the ground.

A Coordinating Council working group has been formed to work with USFS staff to help develop the implementation plan. The working group developed an action plan with goals and targets and provided this to the USFS. The USFS has now provided the group with an implementation plan outline and the full Coordinating Council endorsed this in January. The working group will continue to coordinate with USFS leadership team in completing the draft plan, scheduled to be completed in March. The full Coordinating Council will review the plan during the April meeting.

To complement this planning effort and also help move concepts to on-the-ground projects, the Coordinating Council is focusing on demonstration projects. There is strong agreement that integrated forest management centered on ecological restoration and diverse and local use of woody biomass need to be demonstrated in specific geographic areas. Also, designing these demonstration projects with indicators and measurements that help ensure local communities and economies benefit, and that the work is supported with local stakeholder input is critical for successful projects. The Coordinating Council began drafting a list of issues that need to be included in the demonstration projects. Examples of these are targeting both support for existing biomass infrastructure, as well as, identifying new infrastructure needs, attracting

private capitol and introducing new revenue streams to support forest work. The Coordinating Council also began drafting a list of criteria to be used to identify the specific areas to target the demonstration projects. Some of these included: areas with strong community-based forest collaboratives and opportunities to treat the greatest amount of acreage with the least amount of funding through integrated project design that addresses multiple needs in one area (fuels reduction, meadow restoration, etc.).

On February 2, the Department of Agriculture announced the award of two federal Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) grants in the Sierra Nevada. The Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG) received an award of \$730,000 this year and the Burney-Hat Creek Basins Project in Lassen County received \$605,000. The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Act provided for a nationwide, competitive grant program, with the grant applications generated locally. Only 10 grants were awarded nationwide. The funding is part of a 10 year commitment, which is subject to annual appropriation by Congress. These collaborative efforts have developed landscape scale restoration projects that will improve forest health, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and provide significant economic and social benefits for the local communities.

The success of these two projects, along with the previous award to the Dinkey Creek project in 2010, is a very positive development, consistent with the objectives of the SNC's Initiative. SNC has coordinated with the Burney Hat Creek group and has provided significant support to the ACCG. In particular Brandon Sanders of the SNC Staff deserves special mention for his efforts, and Kim Carr and Mark Stanley have also provided assistance to this project.

### **Next Steps**

The Coordinating Council will coordinate with USFS staff on the draft Ecological Restoration Implementation Plan and review the draft plan. The Coordinating Council will continue to develop criteria for demonstration selection and identify key issues to address within the demonstration projects.

The ACCG has asked the SNC to engage in conversations with the parties regarding a possible role for the organization in the long-term management of the CFLRP grant. This could include becoming a party to a Master Stewardship Agreement with the USFS, in partnership with the ACCG. There remain many unanswered questions and the need for additional information and in the coming weeks an effort will be undertaken to resolve issues and provide clarification regarding a potential role for SNC. Should such a role be identified, specific authorizations to proceed will be brought back to the Board, possibly as early as the June Board meeting.

### **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.**

### **Background**

The [Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project](#) is managed through a partnership by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) the [National Geographic Society](#), and the [Sierra Business Council](#).

Through the use of an interactive website, a printed MapGuide, mobile phone application, and social media outlets, the project celebrates and promotes California's Sierra Nevada Region as a world-class vacation destination. The project works to boost tourism while contributing to local communities' economic health, and promoting long-term stewardship of the Region. Local communities are already suggesting that the MapGuide has helped to increase tourism in the Sierra Nevada Region.

Since 2009, through the formation and volunteer efforts of local residents, public land managers, and business owners that make up four regional Geocouncils (the Sierra Cascade, Tahoe Emigrant Corridor, Yosemite Gateways and Southern Sierra), the project has successfully published more than 1,300 unique, personally-written "destination pages". Destination pages offer the locals' perspective on the best experiences, dining, events, and attractions in the Region.

Funding and in-kind support for the project has come from several sources including: The National Scenic Highways and Byways Administration, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Sierra Business Council, Morgan Family Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks, California Tahoe Conservancy, Nevada Commission on Tourism, multiple Sierra Nevada counties, several Tribal organizations, Northern Sierra Partnership, and many more local businesses and service groups. The project has grown a list of more than 70 [supporters](#) that have formally endorsed the project, including all 22 Sierra Nevada Counties.

### **Current Status**

Project staff continue to assist local contributors add content to the website, but are now primarily focused on marketing and advertising. To date, the project has garnered broad earned-media attention resulting in more than 124 articles in major magazines, and newspapers, which combined with internet, television and radio coverage, have extended the reach of the project to an international level.

Strategic placement of additional advertising in key California markets this year is expected to double traffic to the website and increase travel to the Region. Marketing strategies include purchased advertising for the internet, print, radio, and special events. Advertising and marketing will be complemented through distribution of 100,000 printed MapGuides.

Recent accomplishments in project content deserve some special notice. Working with California State Parks, SNC project interns have completed destination pages for 52 Historical Landmarks in the Sierra Nevada. When completed, 237 destination pages for all Historical Landmark Monuments in the SNC Region will be instantly accessible to travelers using Droid or iPhone hand-held mobile devices. Significant progress is also being made to complete destination pages for all California Watchable Wildlife locations in the Region.

Web site traffic is monitored closely and continues to grow each month. Reports for the month of December indicate more than 16,000 visits from people in 92 countries.

Project staff also continues to participate in the National Geocouncil, which is focused on leveraging the exposure of eight U.S. Geotourism Projects. Most recently, lead by efforts at the SNC, the National Geocouncil provided information to the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and the Western States Tourism Policy Council to recognize U.S. Geotourism Projects as significant contributions towards achieving WGA's "Get Out West" initiative, America's Great Outdoors Initiative, and the recently launched presidential initiatives to increase U.S. travel and tourism.

### **Next Steps**

Staff and project partners will continue to develop website content and explore new opportunities to market and increase exposure to potential visitors. SNC Staff will also take specific actions to support the implementation of SNC's Strategic Plan, such as strengthening a "Sierra" brand to help define the Region, supporting new opportunities to provide volunteer experiences for visitors to the Region, supporting agritourism opportunities for visitors to appreciate and experience Sierra ranches and farms, and supporting efforts to increase the public's ability to access public lands.

Maintenance and growth of the project will require continued efforts to raise funds or generate revenue. SNC staff and project partners will continue to seek and secure new sources to support the project.

### **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.**

### **Background**

The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) was formed in 2004 as the result of a court settlement in 2003, and is responsible for developing and implementing a land conservation plan for the permanent protection of more than 140,000 acres of Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) watershed lands (the Watershed Lands) located in 22 counties. This is referred to as PG&E's Land Conservation Commitment. Some watershed lands will be donated to public entities, Native American tribes, or qualified nonprofit conservation organizations. Conservation easements or conservation covenants will be placed on the watershed lands to ensure that the Beneficial Public Values (BPV) of the parcels are protected in perpetuity.

The Stewardship Council is expected to dissolve after the completion of its work on the land conservation program. The Stewardship Council's dissolution is not expected until 2016 or thereafter.

In September, 2010 the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Board authorized its Executive Officer to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and subsequent funding agreements with the Stewardship Council. Further, the SNC Board also authorized the Executive Officer to establish an appropriate budgetary mechanism to receive and expend funds necessary to fully cover the costs to perform the responsibilities associated with the MOU and any subsequent authorized agreements between the SNC and the Stewardship Council.

Also in September, 2010 the Stewardship Council board delegated authority to the Stewardship Council Executive Director to enter into a MOU with SNC that would guide the negotiation of specific contracts. The MOU was signed in November, 2010 by both designees and contains items pertaining to: 1) SNC serving as the covenant holder on watershed lands donated to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS); and 2) SNC performing certain other third-party roles related to the monitoring of lands or easements to be donated to various organizations held by other entities on donated PG&E lands. The MOU clearly states that no agreement would require SNC to perform duties unless adequate financial resources were provided to reimburse SNC, and such duties would only be performed to the extent that resources were made available.

The Stewardship Council has made progress in identifying donees for fee title and conservation easements, and is planning this spring and summer to bring to its board for approval the first Land Conservation and Conveyance Plans that have been drafted, including all proposed transaction documents.

### **Current Status**

**CONSERVATION COVENANTS:** SNC Staff and Legal Counsel are working to resolve all outstanding matters involved with placing and accepting conservation covenants on lands to be donated to the USFS, including all necessary approvals by the Stewardship Council, USFS and SNC.

**THIRD PARTY ROLES:** SNC Staff has been working with the Stewardship Council to complete final definitions of the roles and budget details for inclusion in the funding agreements for reimbursement of tasks completed both during the remaining life of the Stewardship Council and after their dissolution. These roles are to be performed in perpetuity as outlined in the MOU.

**FUNDING MECHANISM TO REIMBURSE SNC FOR TASKS COMPLETED:** The Stewardship Council Fiduciary Committee is in the process of selecting a trustee to administer a permanent fund to reimburse the SNC for work completed to perform third party roles, including holding conservation covenants on lands donated to the USFS. SNC Staff has been in discussions with the Stewardship Council regarding the selection of this trustee and SNC's requirements as a State agency.

**PLAN TO MONITOR THE ECONOMIC AND PHYSICAL IMPACTS OF THE PG&E LAND CONSERVATION COMMITMENT:** SNC Staff and the Stewardship Council are completing a Scope of Work to specifically define the proposed responsibilities of the SNC. This Role was not included in the MOU of November, 2010, therefore it is anticipated that the Scope of Work and funding agreement would be brought back to the SNC Board in June 2012 for review and approval as an amendment to the existing MOU.

### Next Steps

A recommendation will be brought to the SNC Board in June 2012 to authorize an amendment of the November 2010 MOU with Stewardship Council and add language to include: 1) responsibility of the SNC to approve successor conservation easement holders for conservation easements on lands retained by PG&E in the event that original easement holders desire to assign their interest or cease to exist, 2) clarifying that SNC is willing to serve as a back-up conservation easement holder on a temporary basis for conservation easements on lands retained by PG&E, and 3) the Scope of Work and funding agreement for the Plan to Monitor the Economic and Physical Impacts of the PG&E Land Conservation Commitment. All other responsibilities will remain the same as outlined in the original MOU.

SNC Executive Officer and Stewardship Council Executive Director will execute a master agreement pertaining to acceptance of covenants and related SNC roles on the Kings River and Deer Creek planning units. The master agreement will also accommodate future amendments to cover all conservation covenants that SNC will accept via the Stewardship Council processes.

Upon execution of master agreement and verification that all funding mechanisms are in place, the SNC will complete baseline condition reports for The Deer Creek and Kings River donation units to be included in the Stewardship Council's Land Conservation Plan. The USFS and PG&E will review the baseline condition reports and indicate whether they have any concerns about the content.

**Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time. SNC staff will work to complete the Scope of Work for the Plan to Monitor Economic and Physical Impacts, with a goal of bringing a proposed revised MOU to the Board at the June Board meeting. Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.**