**March 12, 2014** **1:00 – 5:00 PM**

**Joint Meeting of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Conservancy**

Convention Center, Room 202
1400 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Meeting Purpose/Desired Outcomes:** The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (DC) understand the benefits of working collaboratively to build greater understanding of (1) the interconnections between our two regions and (2) the resulting need for integrated approaches to addressing water and climate issues from the Sierra to the Sea. Our Governing Boards have come together today to build understanding regarding the issues facing our two regions and their linkages, to increase awareness of the need to invest in integrated approaches that account for the inter-connections from the Sierra to the Sea, and to increase awareness of the role our Conservancies play in achieving conservation outcomes across our linked ecosystems.

The Governing Boards of the Sierra Nevada and Delta Conservancies will receive presentations relating to key issues that affect both regions represented by the Conservancies and may adopt a Joint Resolution regarding the working relationship between the two organizations.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1:00 – 1:05**<br>(5 minutes) | **Convene Joint Meeting** | BJ Kirwan<br>Ken Vogel<br>Board Chairs |
| **1:05 – 1:15**<br>(10 minutes) | **Roll Call** | Board Liaison(s) |
| **1:15 – 1:25**<br>(10 minutes) | **Welcome** | John Laird<br>Secretary, Natural Resources Agency |
| **1:25 – 2:00**<br>(35 minutes) | **Sierra to the Sea Overview**<br>EO's identify Sierra/Delta issues and how they interrelate | Jim Branham<br>Campbell Ingram |
| **2:00 – 2:15**<br>(15 minutes) | **Sierra to the Sea in a Statewide Context** | Senator Fran Pavley |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2:15 – 2:45**<br>(30 minutes) | **Sierra/Delta Legislators Discussion** | Assemblyman Brian Dahle<br>Senator Lois Wolk |
| **2:45 – 3:00**<br>(15 minutes) | **Break** | |
| **3:00 – 4:15**<br>(75 minutes) | **Panel Discussion:**<br>Threats and Opportunities—a system-wide view | |
| | A. Climate change and its impacts on the Sierra and the Delta. | Dr. Daniel R. Cayan, Scripps Institution and US Geological Survey |
| | B. A policy perspective on the link between the Sierra and the Delta. | Felicia Marcus, State Water Resources Control Board |
| | C. How ecosystem services tie the Sierra and the Delta regions together. | David Edelson, The Nature Conservancy |
| **4:15 – 4:45**<br>(30 minutes) | **Joint Resolution**<br>Board Presentation, Discussion, Public Comment and Vote | SNC/DC Board Chairs |
| **4:45 – 5:00**<br>(15 minutes) | **Public Comment**<br>**Meeting Wrap up and Adjournment** | SNC/DC Board Chairs |

**March 12, 2014**
**Reception** **5:30 – 7:30 PM**
Following the joint meeting, Boardmembers and staff will attend a reception open to the public. The reception will be held at Leland Stanford Mansion, 800 "N" Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

**March 13, 2014**
**Board Meeting**
**California Department of Food and Agriculture, Auditorium**
**1220 N Street**
**Sacramento, CA 95814**

SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

**9:00 – 1:00 PM**
*(End time is approximate)*

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**

**III. Roll Call**

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

**V. Public Comments**
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.

**VI. Board Chair's Report**
The Chair of the Board will provide an update on matters of interest to the Governing Board.

**VII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
a. Administrative Update
b. Governor's Budget/Cap and Trade Auction Revenue Update
c. Rim Fire Update
d. Policy and Outreach Update
e. SNFCI Update

**VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

**IX. 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Awards (ACTION)**
The Board may take action on recommended grants to be awarded under the 2013-14 grant program. Staff will present the following projects and their related California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents to the Board for action:

- Project #780--Plumas Community Energy Wood Processing Facility with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #773 – Sagehen Basin Old Forest Sensitive Species Habitat Restoration Project with Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)
- Project #788 – American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break with Notice of Exemption from CEQA
- Project #786 – Soaproot Stewardship Project with Mitigated Negative Declaration and MMRP

**X. SNC Grant #412 – Sequoia Riverlands Trust (ACTION)**
The Board may take action to approve project changes for SNC Grant #412, to remove one property and include two additional properties in the scope of work, make changes to the language in the deliverables and extend the grant project completion date from March to December, 2014.

**XI. Sierra Nevada Geotourism (ACTION)**
The Board may take action to grant ownership of two mobile phone applications to the Sierra Business Council to support the Sierra Nevada Geotourism project.

**XII. Biomass Utilization Efforts (Informational)**
Staff will provide the Board an update on a variety of issues and activities affecting the utilization of forest biomass.

**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**

---

Meeting Materials are available on the SNC Web site at www.sierranevada.ca.gov. For additional information or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Mrs. Burgess at (530) 823-4672, toll free at (877) 257-1212; or via email at 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 Board may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation; property negotiations; or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126, subdivision (e)(2)(B)(i).*

**December 4 & 5, 2013**
**Jackson Civic Center**
**33 Broadway**
**Jackson, CA 95642-2301**

SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

## I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

## II. Roll Call

**Present:** BJ Kirwan, Tom Wheeler, Kevin Cann, Este Stifel, Bob Kirkwood, Todd Ferrara, Byng Hunt, Pam Giacomini, Barnie Gyant, Ron Briggs, Sherrie Thrall, and Bob Johnston

**Absent:** John Brissenden and Don Neubacher.

## III. Approval of September 12, 2013 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Boardmember Giacomini requested that the words "area of" be added to paragraph three on page four of the notes to read "Boardmember Giacomini said there would be a large pushback from the northern part of the State if there were no assurances given on the protection of area of origin water rights."

**Action: Boardmember Wheeler moved and Boardmember Hunt seconded a motion to approve the September 12, 2013 meeting minutes with Boardmember Giacomini's edits incorporated. The motion passed unanimously.**

## IV. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

## V. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Kirwan thanked Vice Chair Wheeler for doing a great job as acting chair during the past two meetings, and thanked everyone involved in the previous day's tour to the Kennedy Mine and the Mokelumne River.

## VI. Election of Vice Chair for 2014

Chair Kirwan recognized Vice Chair Wheeler for his last meeting with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). Wheeler nominated Boardmember Hunt to take his place as the Vice Chair for 2014. Wheeler also suggested that the Board consider rotating the Chair position in addition to the Vice Chair position among Boardmembers. After discussion among Boardmembers, Kirwan said that the action wasn't agendized, but Boardmembers could request a specific agenda item to discuss rotating the Chair at an upcoming meeting.

**Action: Boardmember Wheeler moved and Boardmember Briggs seconded a motion to approve the nomination of Boardmember Hunt as the Vice Chair for 2014. The motion passed unanimously.**

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

The SNC's Executive Officer, Jim Branham, updated the Board on a number of SNC initiatives and activities.

a. Administrative Update

Branham announced that SNC's Administrative Chief, Theresa Parsley, would be retiring at the end of the year and that Amy Lussier would be taking her place.

Parsley reported that the Fiscal Integrity and State Manager's Accountability Act (FISMA) report is being completed for the December 31, 2013 deadline.

Parsley announced that Mandy Vance was hired as the new Conservancy Program Analyst position in the Mariposa office, and that Amy Lussier would be taking over as the new Administrative Chief at the end of December.

Parsley reported that staff was able to address the Butte Creek Meadow Restoration Project water rights legal questions and have executed an agreement for the project in the amount of $295,000. Parsley noted that all agreements for the projects approved in the Ranches and Ag Lands grant round last March have been executed.

Parsley reported that the Mariposa office moved from the fairgrounds in Mariposa to the new, larger office in town on October 17, 2013, and that the new office has a conference room that can be used by local community groups.

Boardmember Cann commented that having the new SNC office in town is great and that it will be nice having staff so close to the County Government Center.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked Parsley what SNC would be gaining by implementing the new computer system mentioned in the staff report. Parsley replied that SNC was implementing system changes in response to State mandates and for emergency preparedness.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Branham reported that he had testified at two legislative hearings occurring during the same week as the Board meeting. The Assembly Natural Resources Committee hosted an informational hearing on forests, fire and fuels reduction that was attended by Assemblyman Chesbro, Assemblyman Dahle, and a number of legislative staff. At that hearing, Assemblyman Chesbro indicated an interest in helping with small-scale biomass moving forward. The Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee held a hearing in Redding to talk about the

water bond. The hearing was hosted by Assemblyman Dahle attended by Assembly Members Rendon, Yamada, and Gray. Branham said that SNC would be following up with Assemblyman Rendon to discuss watershed issues.

Branham reported that discussions with Natural Resources Agency, Secretary Laird are continuing around Cap and Trade auction revenue and SNC's proposal to use such funds for support of small-scale biomass infrastructure.

Branham introduced Regional Policy and Programs Manager, Angela Avery. Avery reported that several news outlets published information on SNC's Fire Threat System Indicators Report, the 2012-13 Annual Report, and the December Board Meeting. Those articles can be found in the SNC in the news section of the web site.

Avery noted that Brandon Sanders would be transitioning from the Mt. Whitney Team in to the Legislative Affairs role for the Regional Policy and Programs Team and that Brittany Covich would be taking on more Outreach and Communications activities for the team.

Avery reported that SNC continues to work to get legislators out in to the Region. Mandy Vance helped organize a tour of the Rim Fire in mid-November. In mid-December SNC will be co-hosting an Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) tour with the Sierra Fund and staff from the Assembly Natural Resources Committee for legislators and their staff, and an AML informational hearing will follow in Sacramento in January. Avery also said that staff would be working with the Truckee Donner Land Trust and other partners to possibly organize a snowmobile tour to Kidd Lake over the winter.

Avery reported that SNC and other partners provided comments on the California Water Action Plan (CWAP) recently released by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), Cal EPA, and the Department of Agriculture to address urgent water needs and provide direction for sustainable water management.

Boardmember Ferrara reported that comments on the CWAP from SNC and others were well received by the CNRA. He noted that a final draft of the plan should be available at the end of December.

Avery reported that staff continue to develop messaging materials for outreach purposes and will be working to schedule a series of meetings with legislators that Boardmembers are welcome to participate in. In addition, staff will be working with The Nature Conservancy to develop a series of print maps and an interactive map that will connect a broader audience to the upper watersheds and the source of their water.

c. Abandoned Mine Lands Initiative Update
SNC's Julie Griffith-Flatter updated the Board on the status of the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Initiative.

Griffith-Flatter reported that there are several AML projects in the pool of applications for the 2013-14 grant round. Griffith-Flatter noted that SNC had previously awarded Proposition 84 funding to three projects, two of which are still active. One of the previously awarded projects, the Combie Reservoir project, was awarded funding in October from the Department of Water Resources Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM).

Griffith-Flatter announced that SNC has been working with the CNRA, the Department of Conservation, other State agencies and partners to develop a uniform due diligence process for identifying AML problems on lands that may be acquired using State funds through a grant program. An AML awareness checklist was developed to identify potential AML problems in advance of awarding funds. Staff will continue to work with the CNRA to incorporate the checklist in to a uniform process and Agency policy.

Griffith-Flatter reported that Assembly Members Dahle and Gordon hosted a legislative tour in June that addressed AML issues, and that staff are currently working with The Sierra Fund to organize another tour in December that will focus on AML issues. Griffith-Flatter noted that new research and data, such as the recent report from Dr. Singer on mercury contamination transport from the Sierra Nevada to the valley, has assisted in heightening the awareness of the problem and interest in the impacts of the Gold Rush.

Griffith-Flatter said staff has been participating in the California Abandoned Mine Lands Agency Group (CAMLAG) to align agency efforts to improve AML impact remediation efforts. Staff will continue to explore ways to support new and ongoing efforts to address AML issues.

Boardmember Kirkwood said it is good to hear that staff are as active in this issue as they are. Branham noted that Griffith-Flatter has done a good job of steering the AML initiative.

d. Joint Activities with Delta Conservancy
SNC Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan reported that SNC has had conversations with the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Conservancy about holding a joint Board meeting in Sacramento in March. The first day would include a workshop with both Boards that would explore the interconnections between the Delta and the Sierra Nevada Region, and may include a joint resolution that both Boards could sign recognizing those interdependencies and calling for policymakers to do the same.

Keegan said that so much of the conversation in Sacramento around water focuses on the Delta, but that addressing Sierra issues is critical – in order to address State water issues, we must start above the Delta. Keegan also thanked the Delta Conservancy for their help in getting the word out about the interconnectedness between the two regions by offering to schedule meetings with key legislators in January.

Boardmember Johnston asked if the bond for the Delta tunnels would be connected to the water bond funding that SNC may be included in. Keegan replied it is her understanding that the tunnels would be separate, but that there may be mitigation funding related to them in the bond that SNC would be in. Boardmember Kirkwood noted that the water users are supposed to fund the tunnels and Boardmember Ferrara said that the processes would be separate.

Branham said staff would welcome the assistance of a Board committee in putting that Board agenda together. Boardmembers Briggs and Giacomini volunteered to assist.

e. Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis
SNC Sustainability Specialist Kim Carr updated the Board on the progress of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis. Carr said that the analysis was completed for the Mokelumne River Watershed and that partners include East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), SNC, and local community groups. Carr reported that the cost avoidance analysis focuses on water as a service provided by the Sierra to the rest of the state and that the analysis is nearing the end of Phase I.

Carr noted that this phase modeled fire risks, looked at what the difference in sediment loading and water quality impacts would be between treated and untreated forests, and explored what the cost would be to treat a low level of critical acreage to protect water and other interests (communities, property, etc.). Carr reported that the modeling shows that when a fire occurs in existing conditions (no treatment) a significant amount of sediment results. Carr reported that the modeling also showed that the fire severity decreased significantly if treatment had been done, and as a result sedimentation is lowered.

Carr reported that the next step for the analysis will be to assign cost to the loss of reservoir capacity due to sedimentation, as well as the loss of infrastructure due to fire. Carr said that future phases may include implementation, expanding to other watersheds, looking at how to appropriately pay for investment in the upper watershed, and possible volunteer programs.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked if the report was available online. Carr noted that some chapters are still being completed but that the full report should be available by the end of the year.

Boardmember Johnston noted that the treatments modeled are all uphill from the watershed, not along the water. Carr said that in the study area, the group decided the best place to put the treatments was adjacent to the water bodies to protect them from sedimentation.

Boardmember Giacomini asked if the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group have been engaged in the analysis. Carr said that there is a good cross representation from the group.

Boardmember Gyant noted that taxpayers are already paying $172 million for the Rim Fire and that we need to talk to people about paying for protection up front. Gyant also said as we talk about the impacts of treating the landscape we need to talk about it in its entirety, including direct and indirect impacts such as lost habitat, recreation, local tourism income, and storage capacity in the reservoirs.

Kirkwood suggested that we talk about spending $10 million now versus $100 million later, (as an example of responsible investment of public funds).

Boardmember Wheeler noted that this report could be used for the whole Region, and that logging income should be included as income and jobs generated by treatment.

Boardmember Stifel asked if staff would be looking at the Rim Fire as a case study, and reviewing impacts in the areas where treatments had been done and not done. Carr said that the group would be tracking what happened with the Rim Fire.

Johnston noted that the report can be transported across the Sierra and that it was done on a very small budget. Carr said that more than 40 staff members have committed time to this study and that over a million dollars of in-kind funding has been contributed by SNC, the US Forest Service (USFS), and other partners.

Boardmember Cann mentioned that Yosemite National Park has information on various types of treatments that were touched by the Rim Fire, and that the Park will be doing quite a bit of their own analysis that can feed in to the avoided cost analysis.

Boardmember Briggs said that he toured a number of Forest Service roads that have been closed in the Eldorado National Forest and learned about many of the issues land managers face when maintaining those roads. Briggs suggested that

the SNC should work on thinning the forest on a level that puts people to work, protects wildlife and habitat, and puts funding towards reopening and maintaining those roads. Branham said that SNC's Sierra Nevada Forest and Communities Initiative focuses on those very issues.

Branham acknowledged SNC Staff Carr and Nic Enstice, USFS partners, The Nature Conservancy, Supervisor Chris Wright from Calaveras County, and Katherine Evatt of the Foothill Conservancy for their involvement in the project.

Branham asked Gyant and Susan Skalski, Forest Supervisor on the Stanislaus National Forest, to give the Board and update on the Rim Fire. Skalski reported that an estimated $127 million was spent on suppression, and an additional $10 million was spent on Burned Area Emergency Response activities focused on landscape stabilization immediately following the fire. Skalski said that a dollar amount hasn't yet been assigned for the restoration and planning work that still needs to occur. Skalski noted that the community has been encouraging the Forest Service to use every tool possible to shorten the process and begin restoration. Skalski said that if all goes as planned, environmental documents should be completed in time for contractors to begin work before the rainy season next year.

Kirkwood asked whether operators at Don Pedro Reservoir have been participating in the restoration discussions and whether they will be contributing financially. Skalski said that Modesto Irrigation District (MID) and Turlock Irrigation District (TID) have been involved but are not contributing financially yet.

Wheeler asked if the environmental community had been engaged and Skalski replied that they have been working together. Branham mentioned that SNC's Mandy Vance has been working very hard with the USFS to bring researchers and the environmental community together to discuss the Rim Fire restoration.

Gyant noted that the Forest Service's approach to restoration of the Rim Fire is going to be done very collaboratively.

Skalski recognized Branham and SNC Staff for their efforts in convening groups around Rim Fire issues.

f. Bureau of Land Management Presentation
Boardmember Stifel gave the Board an overview of the lands that are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Stifel said that BLM manages land for energy development, grazing, recreation, and timber while also protecting natural, cultural, and historical resources nationwide. In the Sierra, BLM is made up of three districts, six field offices, and roughly 1 million acres. Programs managed in the Sierra field offices include two geothermal projects, wild horse and burro grazing, rafting, kayaking, Off Highway Vehicles recreation, wind

energy, solar energy, mountain biking, wild and scenic areas, horseback riding, and mining.

Stifel highlighted a number of projects underway in various field offices, and noted that celebrations are being planned for next year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

Kirkwood asked if BLM has issues with illegal marijuana grow sites like the Forest Service does. Stifel said that all six field offices in the Sierra are engaged in dealing with illegal grow sites.

Boardmember Hunt asked whether BLM was responsible for managing monuments and Stifel replied that typically the underlying land manager was responsible for managing the monument after official designation, but that they can be managed by multiple agencies.

Boardmember Briggs commented that his supervisorial district is proud to be the new home for BLM Mother Lode Field office and that the good work being done in the county puts a real face on government that the community doesn't normally get to see.

**VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul gave an update on proposed bills in the Legislature regarding the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and noted that efforts continue to be made to streamline CEQA.

**IX. 2014 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)**

Branham suggested moving the March meeting in Sacramento from March 5 and 6 to March 12 and 13 to accommodate a joint meeting with the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta Conservancy. Branham also suggested moving the June meeting from June 4 and 5 to June 11 and 12 due to Boardmember conflicts.

**Action: Boardmember Wheeler moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded a motion to approve the 2014 Board Meeting Schedule with edits to the March and June dates. The motion passed unanimously.**

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

The Board considered authorization of a grant award for the 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Grant Program.

Mt. Lassen Area Manager Bob Kingman gave an overview of the Raintree Forest Health Project. Kingman said that SNC funding would specifically be used to complete biomass removal, understory burning, aspen restoration, stream habitat

restoration work, road decommissioning, noxious weed eradication, and project monitoring in conjunction with local high schools.

Kirkwood asked that staff encourage applicants to be very clear about how SNC funded portions of a project fit within the larger project.

Gyant asked if the high schools involved with this project would be linked with the California Forestry Challenge. Kingman said that they would. Briggs and Gyant both commented on what a great job the Forestry Challenge does to give students real world experience.

Boardmember Cann recognized the Resources Conservation District for putting together an exceptional application.

**Action**: **Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Wheeler seconded a motion to adopt (a) California Environmental Quality Act statement of findings as a responsible agency, based on review of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program adopted by the Eldorado County Resource Conservation District; (b) authorize a grant award for the Raintree Forest Health Project in the amount recommended by staff; (c) authorize staff to enter into the necessary grant agreements for this project; and (d) authorize staff to file a Notice of Determination for SNC Project 783 with the State Clearinghouse.**

## XI. Allocation of Up to $1 million for Restoration and Rehabilitation Efforts Related to the Rim Fire (ACTION)

Branham gave an overview of the recommendation to allocate $1 million for Rim Fire Restoration and to work closely with partners such as the Forest Service and the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) collaborative group to identify projects to be funded. He indicated that the funds are available due to a grant awarded a number of years ago that ultimately did not come for fruition and that staff recommends using these funds for Rim Fire restoration rather than the existing 2013-14 grant program.

Boardmember Giacomini asked if staff would work with the ranching community to restore fences and other ranching infrastructure. Branham responded that staff would be working closely with locals, including county supervisors to identify needs and projects that meet the requirements of Proposition 84.

Boardmember Johnston suggested editing Attachment A in the 1st paragraph to say "… shall be consistent with all of the following provisions…"

Boardmember Wheeler said he felt that Boardmembers should be consulted for projects over $50k. Branham said that the Board Chair and Vice Chair would be consulted on projects being recommended for an award.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked if funding could be made conditional on a match from the two irrigation districts affected by the fire. Branham said that staff will have conversations with many impacted groups, including the irrigation districts, but that it would be impractical to make this a condition.

Boardmember Ferrara clarified the funding would be *up to* $1 million, and commended SNC for acting on this effort so quickly.

Briggs said that staff has done a great job identifying this need and opportunity.

Giacomini asked that staff check the document titles to make sure they are consistent.

Stifle recognized SNC for looking for angles to fund needed work that isn't funded by other agencies.

Public Comment:
Jerry Jensen, YSS member and Registered Professional Forester, said that these funds will be extremely valuable and can leverage other funds.

Sherri Brennan, a grazing permittee in the Rim Fire area and a Tuolumne County Supervisor, said that the $250 thousand lost in Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) to the county only represents the months of July and August and that there are continued losses that aren't represented in that number. Brennan said that even though TID and MID are participating in discussions; SNC's funding shouldn't be tied to their involvement. Brennan asked that SNC consider projects that provide seed money for transportation to remove small-scale biomass. Brennan added that Tuolumne County is working on a map that will indicate the relationship between private foothill lands and Forest Service grazing allotments. Brennan commented on the need for investment to replace ranching infrastructure on both Forest Service and private lands.

John Sturtevant, YSS participant and Sierra Club representative, said that YSS needed a lot of funding for projects before the fire and that the need is even greater now. Sturtevant thanked SNC for the funding and said that everyone in YSS is on the same page and ready to go to work.

Susan Skalski, Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor, suggested using funds for work the Forest Service doesn't get funding for such as fencing for sensitive areas, volunteer coordinators, seeding or hand-planting of sensitive areas, tree planting, refurbishing recreation sites, cleaning culverts, trail repair, and road rehabilitation.

Boardmember Kirwan said that she was impressed by the agency, public, and environmental collaboration as evidenced by the public comments.

**Action: Boardmember Wheeler moved and Boardmember Giacomini seconded a motion to authorize expenditure of up to $1 Million of Proposition 84 funds, consistent with the criteria identified in the "Rim Fire Restoration Grant Guidance" document with Boardmember edits. The motion passed unanimously.**

**XII. Agricultural Lands and Ranches System Indicators Report (ACTION)**

Keegan noted that the Agricultural Lands and Ranches System Indicators Report is the final report to be completed for the Region and that next steps involve distributing the information and establishing a plan to keep all of the System Indicators Reports up to date.

Mt. Whitney Area Representative, Liz van Wagtendonk, summarized the key points of the Agricultural and Ranch Lands System Indicators Report. Van Wagtendonk noted that while this report focuses on private lands, private lands are closely connected with grazing allotments on public lands.

Boardmember Ferrara asked if climate was a factor in determining what types of working landscapes were available. Van Wagtendonk said that climate and topography were huge drivers in identifying working landscape types in the report. Boardmember Cann commented that soil plays a role in the type of working landscapes that can be supported by certain areas as well.

Cann asked where the information on the net cash income came from. Van Wagtendonk said that it came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture, and that the data is reported on a county by county basis. Boardmember Briggs noted that responses to the Census are voluntary.

Briggs asked what the average government payment reflects. Van Wagtendonk said that the average government payment reflects the federal programs through the farm bill that are provided back to the operators and do not reflect any funding that might be coming from a state or local source.

Boardmember Giacomini asked if it would have been better to use the 2010 or 2011 Agricultural Commissioner's reports instead of the 2007 census. Van Wagtendonk said that not all counties have up to date commissioner's reports and the decision was made to utilize the data that was available for all 22 counties of the Region. Van Wagtendonk said that where there were commissioner's reports available, the data was very similar. Giacomini noted that the numbers used in the report are probably behind. Van Wagtendonk said that data from the 2012 census is currently being compiled and that the data will be compared with this baseline report.

Boardmember Kirkwood noted that the grazing allotments on public lands are very closely tied to the financial health of the operations on private lands, and asked if a

section should be added to the report that would address the significance of that connection. Van Wagtendonk highlighted additional data that she was aware of that addressed the connection, and noted that she would add that information to the report.

Giacomini noted that Larry Forero, Shasta County UC Cooperative Extension, and David Lyle, Lassen County UC Cooperative Extension, would be good resources for the report.

Gyant noted that Forest Service has 702 allotments in CA, 500 of which are active, that several different permits exist for each allotment, and that he had a Forest Service contact that would be a good resource for that aspect of the report.

Boardmember Johnston asked why Department of Water Resources (DWR) field data wasn't used for the report. Van Wagtendonk said that DWR field data wasn't used because there wasn't data for all of the Sierra Nevada Region and the decision was made to focus on data sets available for the entire Region. Johnston commented that the census data only receives about a 50-60 percent participation rate, the rest of the data is modeled. Van Wagtendonk noted that staff has the ability to analyze this data in house for future reports. Keegan also noted that additional data could be included in later reports over time.

**Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Wheeler seconded a motion to approve the Agricultural Lands and Ranches System Indicators Report with Boardmember edits and the addition of grazing allotment information. The motion passed unanimously.**

## XIII. Boardmembers' Comments

Kirwan acknowledged Boardmember Cann's last meeting.

Cann commented on his positive involvement with SNC and said that he looks forward to continue working with SNC in the capacity of county supervisor.

Wheeler thanked the Board for being dedicated and making the Sierra a better place to live and work.

Giacomini reported that she spoke on a water panel at the California State Association of Counties where she made the forest/water connection and it created a lot of discussion. Cann said that he was at the same meeting and agreed that the forest/watershed connection was well-made.

Gyant thanked SNC for making difference in the Forest Service's ability to manage the National Forest lands in the Sierra through SNC's partnerships and relationships.

## XIV. Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

## XV. Adjournment

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 12:52 PM.

**Current Status – Budget**

The Governor's proposed 2014-15 budget was released on January 10, 2014. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) base funding that pays for staff, programs and operations remains stable. There was an increase of $329,000 that included $47,000 for annual state administrative fees and $282,000 that was included erroneously. We are working with the Department of Finance to correct the misallocated $282,000. There were no appropriations proposed from Proposition 84, as all funds available to the SNC have already been appropriated. The current status of SNC's 2013-14 budget can be viewed in Attachment A.

**Current Status – Human Resources**

In January, SNC welcomed three new staff members: Belinda Gutierrez, Jennifer Barnes, and Denice Maberry. Belinda is a former SNC student, and will assist with SNC's social media and outreach efforts over the next two years. Jennifer came to us from the Franchise Tax Board. She will work part time processing payroll and staff benefits. Denice previously worked for the Department of Health Care Services and will fill SNC's front desk position working part time. These positions are a result of filling one vacant part-time position and a move to meeting organizational needs more through in house personnel than contract employees.

**Current Status – Business Services**

On January 17, 2014, Governor Brown declared a drought state of emergency. In his proclamation he asked all State Agencies to reduce their water use by 20 percent. SNC is following the Best Management Practices established by the Department of General Services and will make every effort to conserve water. We have also added the State's "save our water" icon to our homepage, which directs visitors to the State's water conservation page.

**Current Status – Grants Administration**

Staff continues to support the 2013-14 Proposition 84 Grant Program by supporting project evaluation, award recommendations, and agreement implementation. The Rim Fire Restoration process has been developed and will be deployed once appropriate projects are identified. The SNC has responded to five grantee audits from the Department of Finance and expects to receive the draft findings soon. Staff continues to work with grantees to successfully close out projects as well as, update agreements as needed.

**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.**

## 2013-14 SNC EXPENDITURES AND ENCUMBRANCES
## Through December 31, 2013

| State Operations | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Personal Services*** | ***Budgeted*** | ***Expended*** | ***Balance*** | ***% Spent*** |
| SALARIES AND WAGES | 2,074,591 | 951,237 | 1,123,355 | 46% |
| STAFF BENEFITS | 806,637 | 365,973 | 440,663 | 45% |
| ***Personal Services, Totals*** | ***$2,881,228*** | ***$1,317,210*** | ***$1,564,018*** | ***46%*** |

| ***Operating Expenses & Equipment*** | ***Budgeted*** | ***Expended*** | ***Balance*** | ***% Spent*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| GENERAL EXPENSE | 216,461 | 104,203 | 112,258 | 48% |
| TRAVEL - IS | 58,000 | 18,931 | 39,069 | 33% |
| TRAVEL - OS | 1,737 | 0 | 1,737 | 0% |
| TRAINING | 30,000 | 9,754 | 20,246 | 33% |
| FACILITIES | 293,668 | 281,635 | 12,033 | 96% |
| UTILITIES | 16,000 | 7,522 | 8,478 | 47% |
| CONTRACTS- INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT | 735,621 | 402,193 | 333,428 | 55% |
| CONTRACTS- EXTERNAL | 274,250 | 149,246 | 125,004 | 54% |
| INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY | 61,691 | 8,142 | 53,549 | 13% |
| EQUIPMENT | - | - | - | 0% |
| OTHER ITEMS OF EXPENSE | 25,196 | 12,003 | 13,193 | 48% |
| PRO RATA (control agency costs) | 192,148 | 96,074 | 96,074 | 50% |
| ***Operating Expenses & Equipment, Totals*** | ***$1,904,772*** | ***$1,089,702*** | ***$815,070*** | ***57%*** |

| Local Assistance | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Appropriation*** | ***Budgeted*** | ***Expended*** | ***Balance*** | ***% Spent*** |
| 2007 Orig Appropriation; Re-ap.11/12 *(13/14 Yr 3 of 3)* | 17,000,000 | 16,860,505 | 139,495 | 99% |
| 2008 Orig Appropriation; Re-ap.11/12 *(13/14 Yr 3 of 3)* | 17,000,000 | 16,622,271 | 377,729 | 98% |
| 2009 Orig Appropriation; Re-ap.12/13 *(13/14 Yr 2 of 3)* | 15,448,000 | 13,159,493 | 2,288,507 | 85% |

| | ***Budgeted*** | ***Expended*** | ***Balance*** | ***% Spent*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***State Operations*** | ***4,786,000*** | *2,406,912* | *2,379,088* | 50% |
| ***Local Assistance **** | ***49,448,000*** | *46,642,270* | *2,805,730* | 94% |
| **SNC EXPENDITURES, TOTALS** | ***$54,234,000*** | ***$49,049,181*** | ***$5,184,819*** | ***90%*** |

## Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has assumed an active role in both planning and directly funding recovery and restoration actions associated with the largest wildfire in the recorded history of our Region – The Rim Fire.

The unusual magnitude of the Rim Fire has set the stage for discussions and decisions regarding where and how to focus limited resources to restore this area to a state of health and resilience. In December the Board authorized up to $1 million of remaining Proposition 84 funds for this restoration effort. On January 17, staff met with the U. S. Forest Service (USFS), the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions (YSS) collaborative group and others to discuss grant requirements and solicit project ideas. The YSS, which represents a diverse groups of stakeholders, will be counted on to provide key input on how the SNC can best invest its funds in the restoration effort, consistent with the SNC's authority and the requirements of Proposition 84. The SNC was instrumental in the creation and progress of the YSS.

The SNC has also been working closely with the USFS, key stakeholders and scientists, and the Center for Collaborative Policy, to explore key ecological questions and identify recommendations for how to best promote future forest health and resilience in the burn area. This work has included a webinar as well as, a series of two technical workshops. The first workshop was held on December 18, with more than 45 attendees. A second workshop took place on January 31, upon which more specific recommendations for treatment were developed based on the foundational agreements from the first workshop. This information has been provided to the USFS for its consideration in development of environmental documents addressing restoration of the area.

## Current Status

### SNC Funding

Staff will continue to actively engage in identifying projects aligned with Proposition 84 and SNC's programmatic goals. Partners are enthusiastic and have organized themselves around this funding opportunity. With the establishment of a steering committee, the YSS group is poised to contribute project ideas alongside our county and federal partners and will surely bring forward highly beneficial and critically needed projects for SNC consideration and possible funding.

In addition to SNC's commitment of funding, we have reached out to other partners with the goal of leveraging our funds and driving additional investment in the burn area. The Wildlife Conservation Board, California Conservation Corps, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and National Forest Foundation attended the January 17 meeting with SNC Staff and are now engaged in ongoing discussions regarding restoration needs.

### Ecological Workshops

There is a possibility of future workshops in the series which would focus on the topic of reforestation and broader restoration efforts. This is a high profile topic which many are watching, as the restoration approach taken here will provide a valuable learning opportunity to address many unanswered questions in the scientific community. The techniques employed in the Rim Fire burn area will inform future approaches to post-fire

restoration on other large burn areas, which are anticipated to occur with more frequency in the future, particularly given the present drought California is facing this year.

**Next Steps**

SNC will continue our efforts to build consensus around not only individual projects for funding consideration, but also in the broader community around the myriad opportunities and challenges posed post-Rim Fire. The USFS will be releasing some highly important National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions over the next six months, which will further identify projects and assist the broad array of interests involved in directing investment to maximize the impact of those on the ground in a measurable fashion. At this point, it remains unclear as to whether projects that SNC is interested in funding on USFS lands can only be accomplished after the completion of the overall NEPA process or if some projects may move forward using other NEPA processes (ex.: categorical exclusions).

**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 Conservancy (SNC) Board has directed staff to carry out outreach and communication activities to ensure that the Sierra Nevada Region is appropriately considered in State funding opportunities such as a new 2014 Water Bond. SNC staff continues to identify and act upon opportunities to increase awareness of the Sierra Nevada Region's important role in ensuring water quality and supply which are critical components of the states' overall environmental and economic health and well-being.

## Current Status

The new calendar year has brought some significant developments on efforts undertaken by the SNC. While the results are somewhat mixed, we believe the SNC and partner outreach efforts to communicate the value of Sierra Nevada watersheds to the rest of the state is having an impact.

In October 2013, the SNC and many of our partners in the Region provided comments on the California Water Action Plan (Plan), a document authored by the California Natural Resources Agency, Cal EPA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture to "identify key actions for the next one to five years that address urgent needs and provide the foundation for sustainable management of California's water resources." The final Plan was released in January and we are pleased to report that revisions include a new effort focused on better management of Sierra Nevada headwaters to help water storage, water quality and ecosystems.

In 2013, SNC Staff worked with the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) and Cal Fire in developing a proposal for expenditure of Cap and Trade (C&T) Auction Revenue in the forest sector. The SNC proposal recommended funding for three activities: 1) development of forest biomass energy infrastructure; 2) a short-term transportation incentive to move biomass from piles to existing facilities; and 3) forest restoration treatments on USFS lands. The Governor's proposed budget did not propose any Cap and Trade Auction Revenue funding for the SNC. However, the Governor's budget proposal did include an allocation of $50 million to Cal Fire for a variety of forest sector activities, including fire prevention and urban forestry projects. SNC Staff is working with Cal Fire to assist in identifying opportunities for promoting projects in the Sierra Nevada that help achieve the goal of reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Staff has been working with partners such as The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Pacific Forest Trust and other Conservancies to inform the discussion around a series of water bond measures making their way through the Legislature. There are currently four bills pending that would place a new version of the water bond on the November 2014 ballot.

Of those, the most recent version of Senator Wolk's bill (SB 848) directly allocates $65M to the SNC, while Assembly Member Rendon's bill (AB 1331) is not specific in terms of a dollar figure for the SNC (or any other Conservancy, but does contain a placeholder for allocation by region. The other two bills, SB 927 by Senator Cannella

and AB 1445 by Assembly Member Logue are primarily focused on issues such as surface storage and the availability of safe drinking water, and do not include funding for the SNC or any other Conservancy.

Staff will continue efforts to share facts and data, educate policy-makers on opportunities and challenges facing the region, and serve as a primary source of on-the-ground perspective relative to the State's primary water supply. The SNC is emerging as a known source for useful information on the range of Sierra issues, and we will continue to reinforce and build upon that perception in the months ahead while working with partners to advocate for a "fairer share" for the Region.

With California facing water shortfalls as a result of 2013 being the driest year in recorded state history, Governor Brown proclaimed a State of Emergency in January. The SNC responded by updating our outreach materials and efforts to include information about how drought affects California's water source and how investment in the upper watersheds of the Sierra Nevada can make our State's water system more drought resilient. In addition to creating a Drought Fact Sheet (Attachment A) to educate legislators considering solutions to the issue, the SNC has updated its web page and begun a Facebook campaign to provide current information about Sierra Nevada snowpack conditions, statewide reservoir conditions, and links to other useful information to keep Sierra Nevada residents and others informed.

**Legislative Outreach**

In January, the legislature returned from winter recess and picked up discussion on a number of bills of interest to the SNC. Staff worked with partners to ensure that Sierra Nevada voices were heard at the following Water Bond and Cap and Trade hearings:

- January 14th: Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee hearing regarding the water bond.
- February 11th: Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee hearing on SB 848, Senator Wolk's water bond proposal.
- February 13th: Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee hearing on regarding the Governor's Proposed 2014-15 Expenditures for Cap and Trade Auction Revenues

SNC and partners have also been meeting with legislators to reiterate the importance of investing in California's watersheds to restore forest health and protect upper watersheds from large-damaging fires such as the Rim Fire and the associated impacts. At the time of writing this report, SNC had met with 14 legislators and/or their staff including:

- Assembly Member Mariko Yamada
- Senator Lois Wolk
- Senator Jean Fuller
- Senator Fran Pavley

- Senator Ricardo Lara
- Assembly Member Talamantes-Eggman
- Senator Ted Gaines
- Senator Tom Berryhill
- Assembly Member Rich Gordon
- Assembly Member Henry Perea
- Assembly Member Jim Patterson
- Assembly Member Frank Bigelow
- Assembly Member Anthony Rendon
- Assembly Member Brian Dahle

SNC is working with partners to organize a number of tours in the coming months. In particular, Assembly Member Dahle has been actively engaged in arranging for legislators to visit the Region, and SNC is coordinating closely with him and his staff. Current plans include a trip to the Oroville dam to stress the importance of watersheds in the state water policy debate, a trip to the Truckee area to view land conservation efforts and discuss drought effects and a tour of the Rim Fire burn area to show the scope and impacts of the fire.

**Unifying Sierra Voices**

SNC Staff is coordinating with the Sierra Business Council (SBC) in its efforts to organize a Sierra Coalition. SBC hopes to create a broad based coalition similar to the one that came together in efforts to create the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. This coalition will work to ensure that the Sierra Nevada is included in policy and funding discussions by positioning "Sierra needs" – such as watershed health and forest management – as solutions to larger statewide problems, and communicating that message with a unified voice to Sierra and urban legislators and other key decision-makers. SNC Staff will assist the effort, consistent with rules governing state agencies, by providing information and participating in various outreach efforts.

Sierra Coalition goals include:

1. Inclusion of the Sierra Nevada and the SNC in the water bond;
2. Better positioning of the Sierra in the current budget and ongoing C&T investment planning; and,
3. Identification and exploration of longer-term financing mechanisms for Sierra projects.

**Outreach and Education Materials and Efforts**

The Sierra Drought Fact Sheet referenced above is the latest in a series of materials the SNC has developed to support efforts to educate legislators and other decision-makers about the need for investment in the upper watersheds of our Region. Others materials include the Rim Fire Fact Sheet (Attachment B), the Water Fact Sheet (Attachment C), and the Fire and California's Water Supply map (Attachment D). Staff is also working to develop an Abandoned Mine Lands and a Tourism and Recreation fact sheet as well.

**Next Steps**

SNC will continue to schedule meetings with legislators in 2014 with renewed focus on identifying legislators actively involved in Water Bond decisions and with legislators from districts that are direct recipients of Sierra Nevada water

Staff will also continue to develop outreach materials and messages and to establish new methods for sharing those materials and messages. The Rim Fire, the Mokelumne River Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis and the issue of the effects of catastrophic fire on reservoir storage capacity will continue to be focus areas.

To that end, staff will be considering ways to better share outreach and communication messages, tools and materials with Boardmembers, County Liaisons and stakeholders to facilitate effortless communication of Sierra needs in your local areas.

**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.**

# Drought and the Sierra Nevada

## The Sierra Nevada Region is the source of more than 60% of California's developed water supply

At the beginning of this year, manual and electronic measurements recorded the statewide water content of Sierra snowpack at about 20% of average, and reservoirs fed by Sierra rivers remain at some of the lowest levels on record. The effects of low snowpack and dwindling reservoir levels are being felt by businesses and homes all over California.

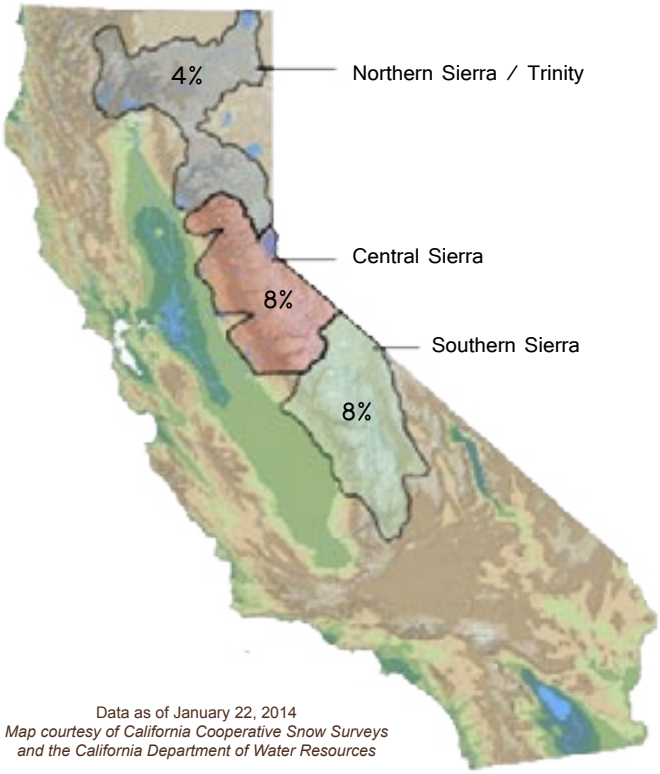
- According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Central Valley may be forced to fallow 300,000 to 500,000 acres of farm land in the spring due to heavy cutbacks in water allocations - that's more than five times the size of the City of Sacramento.
- Tahoe area ski resorts like Royal Gorge and Donner Ski Ranch are temporarily closed, and low water levels in Lake Tahoe have caused one cruise ship company to temporarily stop offering cruises in to Emerald Bay to avoid damage to the boat's propeller.
- In December, the Sacramento County Water Agency urged customers to reduce water use by 20 percent. The city of Folsom ordered a 20 percent reduction in water use and has limited outdoor watering to two days a week.

Sierra forests and meadows play a role in ensuring water quality and reliability for the state. As is evidenced by this year's drought, rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns threaten California's water system and make investing in healthy Sierra Nevada watersheds more important than ever.

*Up to 50% of the flow into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta comes from the Sierra. Healthy Sierra Nevada forests and meadows are critical components to California's water system, and restoring them has become more important than ever.*

*Sierra snowpack comparison, January 2013 to January 2014.*
*Images courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*

## Statewide Summary of Snow Water Content




Data as of January 22, 2014
*Map courtesy of California Cooperative Snow Surveys and the California Department of Water Resources*

## Sierra Nevada resources are already under pressure

During the historic drought of 1977 roughly 22 million people called California home. Now, California's population has grown to more than 38 million, and in 2050 the population is projected to increase to 50 million. As our population grows, even more pressure will be placed on the state's primary water source - the Sierra Nevada.

Sierra meadows have become degraded, resulting in a loss of natural storage that would be released slowly over the dry months when flows are needed most. Healthy meadows also filter sediment and pollutants, contributing to higher quality water for your tap. Investing in meadow restoration is key to optimizing the storage and water quality improvement opportunities that the Sierra Nevada provides naturally.

In addition, Sierra forests are overgrown and unhealthy, and current drought conditions will likely result in an increase in the frequency and intensity of large, damaging wildfires.

Red Flag Warnings have been issued for parts of the Sierra where dry forest conditions are more similar to the month of July than the beginning of January. These fires, like the Rim Fire, can dramatically increase sedimentation and reduce the storage capacity of existing reservoirs.

Investing in the removal of excess biomass fuel, or the small-diameter woody material, branches, and diseased or insect infested wood that is not suitable for commercial use, can improve forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Development of additional biomass power generation facilities in the Sierra Nevada Region that utilize forest waste would provide a ready market for biomass removed as a byproduct of forest restoration activities, creating renewable energy for California, while at the same time protecting forests and communities from large, damamging wildfires.

*Immediate investment in projects that make the Sierra Nevada more drought and fire resilient in the future, such as meadow restoration, forest thinning, and biomass utilization, is essential to ensuring that California's water system can perform under future pressure.*

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a state agency that carries out a mission of protecting the environment and economy in a complementary fashion across 25 million acres, one-quarter of the state. To learn more, please visit the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Web site.

11521 Blocker Dr., Suite 205 Auburn, CA 95603
(530)823-4670 (877)251-1212
s i e r r a n e v a d a . c a . g o v

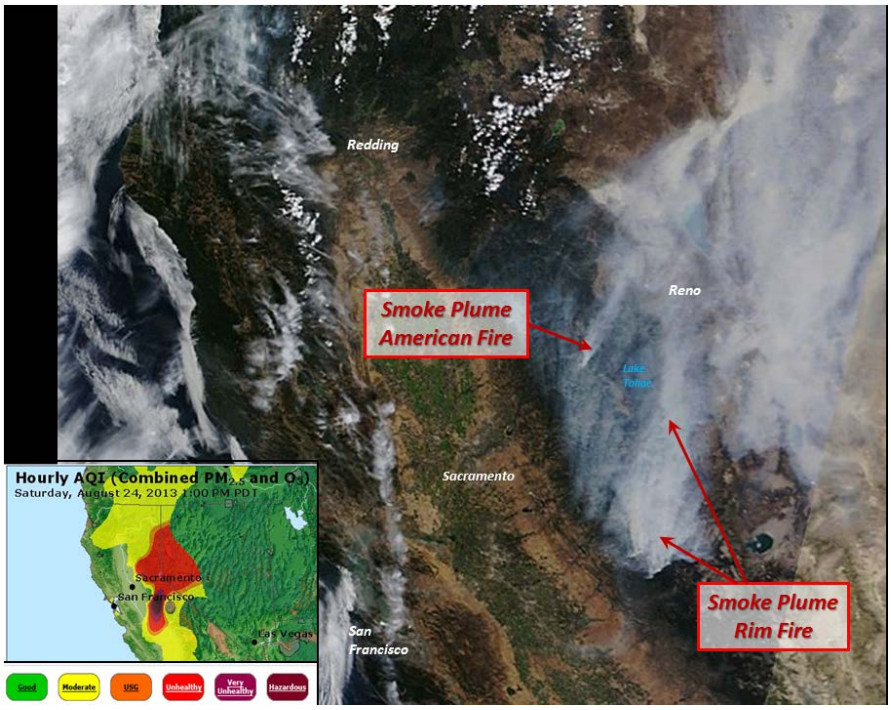
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

# **The Rim Fire:** Why investing in forest health equals investing in the health of California

## What happens in the Sierra doesn't stay in the Sierra

On August 17, 2013 the Rim Fire began burning in the steep, rugged canyons of the Stanislaus National Forest, headed for Yosemite National Park. As devastating as the event was to the local landscape and communities, the impacts of the Rim Fire were widespread:

- On August 23rd, Governor Brown declared a **state of emergency for the City of San Francisco** due to the threat that the fire posed to water and power resources at Hetch Hetchy - the reservoir that serves 2.6 million people in the Bay Area.
- **Air quality warnings** were issued for Lake Tahoe, Carson City, and Reno, **more than 100 miles away**. Some hotels in South Lake Tahoe experienced as much as a 20% drop in business as a result of the smoke.




*The smoke plume from the Rim Fire stretched across the Sierra and in to Nevada, creating unhealthy air as far away as Reno and Carson City.*

*Initial estimates indicate that the Rim Fire released **11,352,608 metric tons of greenhouse gas** emissions. Based on the U.S. EPA's web site, those emissions are roughly equivalent to:*

- Annual **greenhouse gas emissions** from **2.3 million cars**
- **Carbon dioxide emissions** from **1.2 billion gallons of gas** consumed
- **Carbon dioxide emissions** from the electricity use of **1.5 million homes** for 1 year
- Annual **carbon dioxide emissions** of **3.2 coal fired power plants**

## Fire's impacts will be long-term

Decades of fire supression, a changing climate, and a shortage of forest restoration efforts have led to the current unhealthy condition of many of our Sierra forests, resulting in an increase in the frequency of larger, more damaging fires. These fires, like the Rim Fire, take longer to heal and can result in long-term impacts on water quality and supply.

- The Rim Fire burned so hot in some areas -- **five times hotter than boiling water** -- that it changed soil chemistry and structure. These "high burn" areas are **more erosion-prone**.
- Nearly 100,000 acres, about **40% of the area**, burned at **high intensity**. Ecologists say that it could take **30 to 50 years** for the forest to reestablish itself in these areas.
- Denver Water is still spending **millions of dollars** to stem erosion **12 years after** the Hayman Fire burned across 215 square miles in the foothills south of Denver. The Rim Fire has consumed nearly 2 times that area at 402 square miles.

The Rim Fire illustrates both the need to address existing forest conditions in the Sierra and the direct relationship between the Sierra Nevada and the rest of California. More than **60% of California's water** originates in the Sierra Nevada, and Sierra forests store enough carbon to offset the annual carbon dioxide emissions of 108 coal fired power plants. Investing in forest health and reducing the risk of large damaging fires, like the Rim Fire, is essential to ensuring that these Sierra benefits continue to exist in the future.

*Photo Credit: USFS Mike McMillian*

## Rim Fire: Largest fire in recorded history of the Sierra Nevada

The Rim Fire doubled in size during the early stages. In less than 3 weeks it grew to be the largest wildfire in the Sierra Nevada and the 3rd largest in California history.

- To date the Rim Fire has burned, 257,314 acres, about 402 square miles or an area equal to eight times the size of San Francisco.
- Supression cost to date: $127.2 million
- Cost of emergency road, trail, and watershed stabilization efforts to date: $8.5 million
- An estimated $900,000 was spent to purchase alternative energy when 2 of San Francisco Public Utility Commission's (SFPUC) 3 hydroelectric powerhouses were taken offline as a result of the fire. The exact cost to repair the damage to these powerhouses is still unknown, but SFPUC estimates it to be in the millions.
- Habitat for many species, including listed or proposed for listing species such as the California spotted owl, great gray owl, and Pacific fisher was drastically altered.
- Losses to the ranching community, such as destroyed grazing land, killed livestock, and damaged infrastructure, are estimated to be in the millions.
- Tuolumne County budget projections show about $275,000 less in estimated income from the tourism-driven occupancy tax on hotels, campgrounds, and other lodging.

## Investing in forest health, clean energy

During the past five years, over 4.5 million acres of California forests have been impacted by wildfire. Many predict that the size and severity of these fires, like the Rim Fire, will continue to increase unless investment is made in proactive forest restoration treatments. This sustainable forest management includes removing excess biomass, or small diameter trees, branches, and diseased wood, that act as fuel for a fire. Biomass represents a huge untapped resource for the generation of heat and power and its removal can improve forest health and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. In fact, burning biomass in a controlled facility to generate power, as opposed to an open fire, can reduce carbon dioxide emissions and create jobs for rural economies.

*The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a state agency that carries out a mission of protecting the environment and economy in a complementary fashion across 25 million acres, one-quarter of the state. To learn more, please visit the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Web site.*

SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

11521 Blocker Dr., Suite 205 Auburn, CA 95603

(530)823-4670 (877)251-1212

SIERRANEVADA.CA.GOV

# Sierra Nevada Water Facts

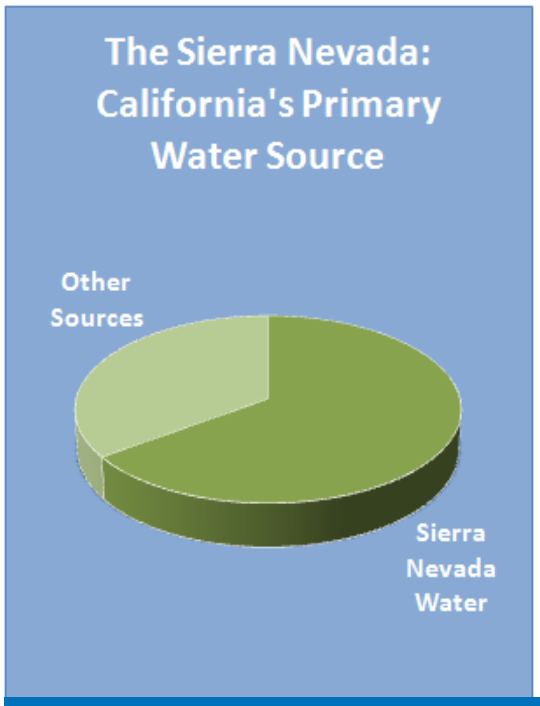
## More than 60% of California's developed water supply originates in the Sierra Nevada

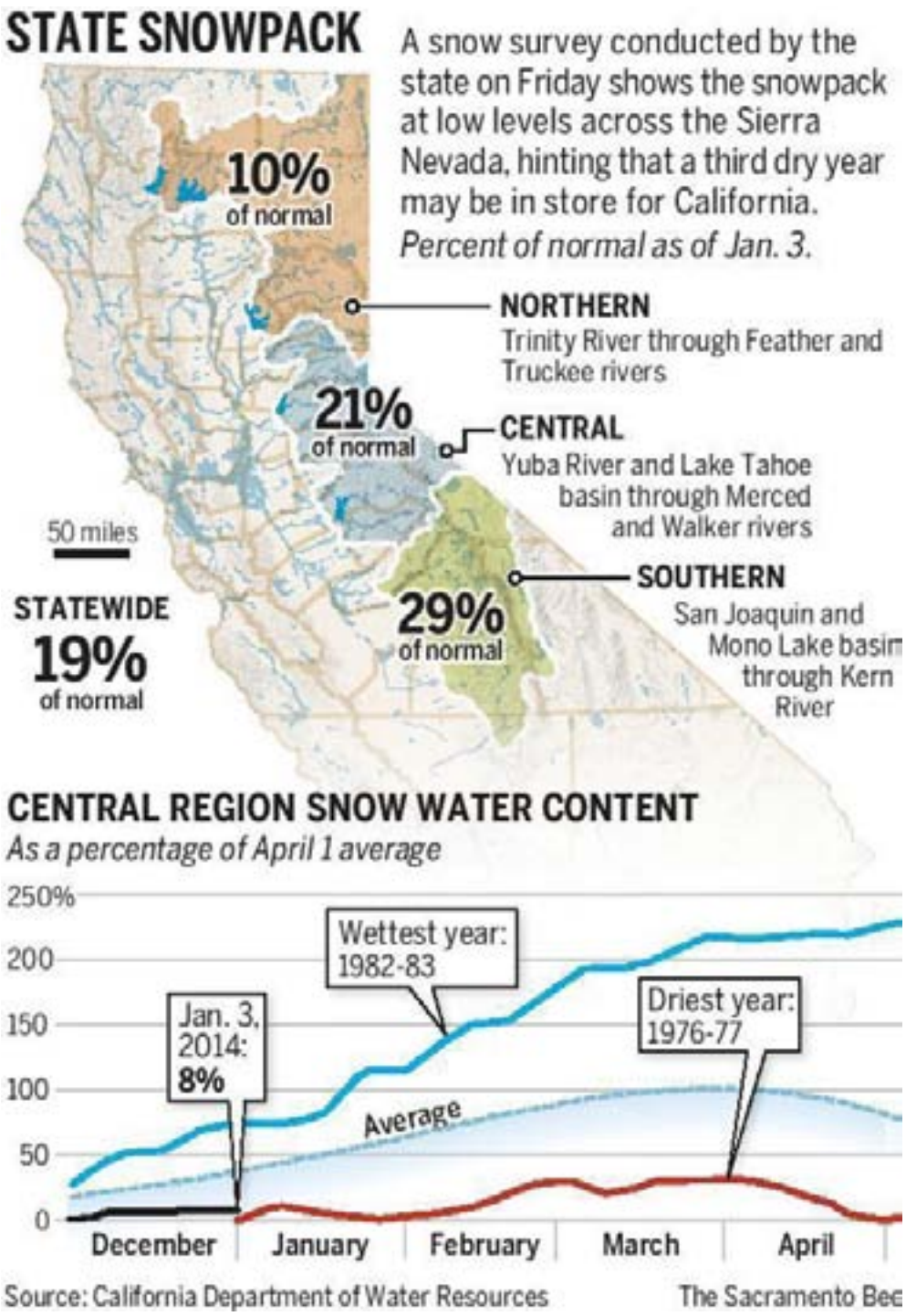
- Sierra Nevada watersheds provide all or part of the **drinking water for 23 million people**.
- Up to **half of the water flowing into the Delta** starts its journey in the Sierra's forested watersheds.
- Snowpack in the **Sierra region provides a natural form of water storage**, and Sierra forests and meadows play a role in ensuring water quality, yield and reliability.

## Sierra forest and watershed health is declining

- Average **temperatures** in the Sierra Nevada **are rising**. This may **result in drier summer conditions**, more precipitation as rain than snow, **earlier snowmelt**, more **large damaging fires**, and **longer fire seasons**.
- The Sierra Nevada contains thousands of abandoned mines. **Toxic substances** associated with legacy mining, **such as mercury**, are **carried downstream** to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta and the San Francisco Bay.

Investment in the state's primary watershed - the Sierra Nevada - is needed to ensure water reliability and improve water quality. Investing to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire, restore meadows, address legacy toxins like mercury, and protect natural lands from conversion to other uses, will preserve Sierra benefits that are shared statewide.






*The image above is courtesy of the Sacramento Bee's article titled "Sierra snow survey points to dry year ahead," published January 3, 2014.*

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is a state agency that carries out a mission of protecting the environment and economy in a complementary fashion across 25 million acres, one-quarter of the state. To learn more, please visit the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Web site.

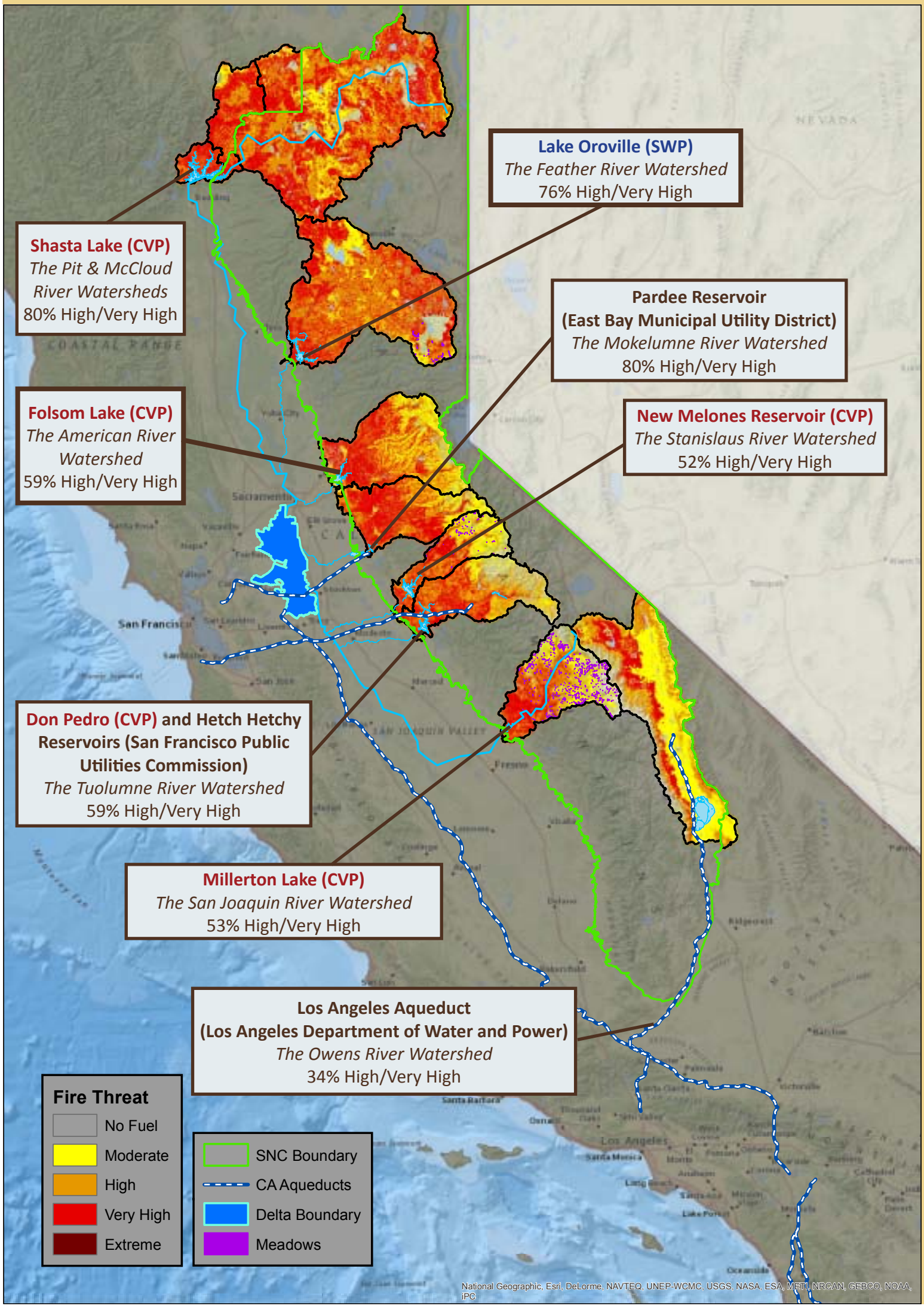
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

11521 Blocker Dr., Suite 205 Auburn, CA 95603

(530)823-4670 (877)251-1212

s i e r r a n e v a d a . c a . g o v

# Fire Threat and California's Water System




### The Sierra-Delta Connection

The Sierra Nevada Region is the source of up to half of the flows into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, providing water critical to the long term ecological health and stability of California's water "hub."

### California State Water Project (SWP)

The Sierra Nevada Region is the primary source of water for the California State Water Project (SWP) – the system that delivers water to two-thirds of California's population and stores and distributes water to 29 urban and agricultural water suppliers in Northern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, the San Joaquin Valley, the Central Coast, and Southern California. Approximately 25 million Californians receive water from the SWP and about 750,000-acres of farmland receive irrigation water from the SWP.

### Federal Central Valley Project (CVP)

The Sierra Nevada Region is a major contributor to the federal Central Valley Project (CVP) – the system that delivers water to farms, homes, and businesses in California`s Central Valley and major urban centers in the San Francisco Bay Area. Annually, the CVP provides irrigation water for about one-third of the agricultural land in California and drinking water for close to one million households. In addition to delivering water for consumption, the CVP produces electric power and provides flood protection, navigation, recreation, and water quality benefits.

## More than 60% of CA's water originates in the forests of the Sierra Nevada

Each of the watersheds highlighted above are **major contributors to the state's water system** via the **California State Water Project (SWP)** and/or the **Federal Central Valley Project (CVP)**. The call-out boxes highlight the **percentage of acres in a particular watershed** that have conditions placing them in the high or very high fire threat category. **Fire Threat** is the **likelihood of a fire to start** combined with the **potential damage a fire might have on the landscape** based on the history of fire occurring in a particular area and current conditions (terrain, vegetation type, weather, etc.).

Recent snowpack surveys and dwindling reservoir levels indicate that California may be experiencing drought conditions that could result in a myriad of challenges for the State's primary water supply, including an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires. Investment in projects that make the upper watersheds of the Sierra Nevada more resilient to drought, such as meadow restoration, forest thinning and biomass utilization, is essential to ensuring California's water supply remains healthy in the face of a changing climate.

SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

## Background

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) launched the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) four years 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 collaboration, including local governments, environmentalists, industry, community, and economic development representatives, and Tribal Entities 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. Members include representatives from the wood products industry, local government, environmental and conservation organizations, community groups, and water interests. The primary federal land managers, the US Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) participate in an advisory role.

## Current Status

The SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council continues to meet quarterly. The primary focus of recent meetings has been identifying and addressing major barriers to increased pace and scale of forest treatment. In the most recent meeting, the Coordinating Council identified specific focus areas with which the Coordinating Council can collaborate with Forest Service staff that must be overcome to increase pace and scale while keeping benefit in local communities. Increased funding was not identified as a focus area, primarily because this is accepted as a given.

The focus areas identified in that meeting include:

- increase the use of fire on the landscape as a forest management tool and restoration method;
- encourage landscape level treatments/landscape size and scale processes;
- creation of new and protection of existing infrastructure to process more wood, including biomass, in a way that keeps benefits in local communities;
- identify and implement contracting tools to maximize local economic and social benefits from restoration activities; and
- increase the percentage of steep slope areas that can be mechanically treated on National Forest lands.

Coordinating Council members are coordinating with Region 5 USDA Forest Service to prioritize the recommendations and refine the strategies identified for moving these areas forward. Much progress has already been made in terms of increasing mechanical treatment potential in steep slope sections of our National Forests, including both policy and technology issues. The Council's Steep Ground Workgroup has been hard at work on this issue, having already hosted a very successful on-the-ground workshop on clay loam at Collins Pine, which included key Forest Service participants.

SNC Staff continue to work with a variety of community-based collaborative groups throughout the Region, including the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative, which hosted a well-attended symposium in February focused on promoting volunteerism on our public lands, as well as Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions, with whom the SNC is working closely in regard to the distribution of SNC Proposition 84 funds for restoration on the Rim Fire landscape (described in more detail in Agenda Item VIIc).

Staff continues to play an active role in an effort to aggregate key pieces of information in terms of biology and policy to create a conservation strategy and decision support system for Pacific Fishers in the southern Sierra Nevada. This species is proposed for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. SNC Staff is heading up public outreach and involvement as it relates to the development of the strategy and decision support system, including public meetings, web content development and periodic email updates to interested stakeholders. Jim Branham represents the SNC on the Steering Committee for this effort, as well Mandy Vance on the Core Support Team. A Technical Team has also been formed and is hard at work developing the strategy and decision support system. The SNC is also supporting this work through an inter-agency agreement with the USFS in order to support the development of the conservation strategy and decision support system.

Another effort that relates to the objectives of SNFCI is the SNC's support of a Forest Service Pacific Southwest Research Station study of illegal marijuana grow site impacts on water quality in the southern Sierra Nevada. This study will result in two deliverables – one focused on pesticide presence/quantity on USFS lands in association with grow sites, and a larger one merging that data with National Park Service and US Geological Survey efforts into a regional assessment of the problem. Combined, these deliverables are designed to give law enforcement the data they need to expand the environmental legal tools available to them. If they can document environmental violations, it allows them to freeze international financial assets, and move beyond mere deportation of offenders. Before they can utilize those tools, however, they need the science to prove the level of degradation occurring. Quantification of the impacts of illegal marijuana gardens on water quality will not only increase law enforcement's authority in dealing with the issue, but will also daylight and raise the profile of the issue with the public, making it relevant not just to wildlife, but also to them, which will bring more awareness and resources to bear on it

**Next Steps**

Staff will continue to support local forest collaborative efforts, focusing on the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) projects and efforts supported by SNC grants. The Coordinating Council will continue to work with the USFS to identify the most strategic areas and strategies to focus their efforts to increase pace and scale while keeping benefit in local communities. The Council's Steep Ground Workgroup has scheduled an April field trip focused on steep slope work on granitic soil, with the end

goal of starting with implementing and monitoring some steep ground treatment in a small area of Forest Service lands, in the hopes of eventually developing a "how to" document for work on steep ground, and identifying how this fits into the bigger picture of forest plan revisions and other policy level decisions.

Staff will continue to support ongoing regional collaborative efforts, such as the Southern Sierra Fisher Conservation Strategy and Decision Support System development and the Rim Fire Ecological technical workshops (described in more detail in Agenda Item VIIc).

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

As a reminder, this round has no final application due date. Applicants may contact SNC Staff at any time while adequate funding remains. Projects that have provided a complete grant application and that receive a minimum score of 85 out of 100 may be presented to the Board for approval.

At the December 2013 Board meeting, the Board authorized one grant in the amount of $250,000. For the March 2014 Board meeting, four projects totaling $1.2 million are being recommended to the Board for approval. Staff expects that the remainder of funds will be recommended for authorization at the June 2014 Board meeting.

## Current Status

Staff has completed review of SNC Projects 780, 773, 788 and 786, and has found that they meet or exceed the threshold scoring level of 85 points. Staff is recommending Board approval of these four projects totaling $1.2 million. The projects are summarized below, with additional information in the attached Exhibit A to this item.

**SNC Project #780 - Plumas Community Energy Wood Processing Facility**
**Score:** 85 of 100
**Grantee Organization:** Sierra Institute for Community and Environment
**Funding Request to the SNC:** $350,000
**Full Project Cost:** $350,000
**Other Funders:** None
**Link to Full Project Description:** Project 780 *(Note: This is a large PDF file and may take a significant amount of time to download. If you have difficulty seeing this information electronically, contact the SNC and we will make alternative arrangement for you to view the material.)*

**Project Summary:** This grant application seeks funding for the development of a wood processing facility in the community of Crescent Mills that will convert small diameter forest biomass from forest thinning projects into conditioned wood chips to supply heating boilers in public facilities in Plumas County. The construction of the wood processing facility will include all components needed to create woodchip fuel to serve multiple institutional boiler systems, including: raw material receiving and storage, chipping, screening, conditioned fuel storage, and loading for distribution. The facility will also be designed to accommodate the future construction of a 3mw combined heat and power biomass facility on-site.

The Sierra Institute's forest biomass project will reduce the use of high cost fossil fuels at public institutions and lower the risk of catastrophic wildfire by integrating the use of woody biomass from thinning and hazard fuel reduction projects in the surrounding forests to heat existing public buildings and facilities. Additional outcomes of the project include the creation of local jobs and reduced greenhouse gas emissions from the controlled combustion of woodchips in local boilers. Operation of this facility will help facilitate sustainable forest fuel management projects, thereby resulting in improved health of forests and wildlife habitat, plus improved security of transmission lines and hydroelectric facilities in the forest. By developing a wood processing facility linked to a network of boilers fueled by wood chips, the project will directly facilitate fuels reduction and forest stand improvement treatment of approximately 200-acres per year.

The Sierra Institute for Community and Environment is in the process of securing adequate land tenure for the site of the facility and has been consulting with SNC Staff to ensure that all grant requirements are met prior to executing a grant agreement.

**CEQA:** This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA under Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) of the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the project is attached. The project will be implemented on an industrial site and is consistent with all local ordinances and zoning. Permitting for the project will be a ministerial action for the County Planning Department. If approved by the Board, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse.

**Letters of Support:**

- Randy Wilson, Plumas County Planning & Building Services
- Micheline G. Migils, Plumas County Office of Education, Plumas Unified School District
- Earl W. Ford, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Plumas National Forest
- Tom Hayes, Eastern Plumas Health Care

**SNC Project #773 - Sagehen Basin Old Forest Sensitive Species Habitat Restoration Project**
**Score:** 90 of 100
**Grantee Organization:** National Forest Foundation
**Funding Request to the SNC:** $349,140
**Full Project Cost:** $1,001,640
**Other Funders:** Forest Service; Wildlife Conservation Board; National Forest Foundation
**Link to Full Project Description:** Project 773 *(Note: This is a large PDF file and may take a significant amount of time to download. If you have difficulty seeing this information electronically, contact the SNC and we will make alternative arrangement for you to view the material.)*

**Project Summary:** The Sagehen Basin Old Forest Sensitive Species Habitat Restoration Project seeks SNC grant funds to treat vegetation on approximately 291 acres of the 2,621-acre project area, located approximately 10 miles north of Truckee. The majority of the project area is currently comprised of thick, homogenous stands of trees and a limited amount of diverse vegetation structure that old forest sensitive species require, particularly foraging habitat. The project will restore stand variability and strategically enhance forest diversity through hand vegetation treatments like small tree cutting and piling, and tree girdling. Specific treatment prescriptions have been designed for use on five different emphasis areas of the forest to optimize beneficial effects for forest health and habitat. Prescribed pile burning followed by prescribed underburn treatments will also help restore the forest to a more natural condition resulting in reduced risks of large catastrophic fire.

**CEQA:** The SNC, acting as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), prepared and circulated an Initial Study /draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for public review from January 3, 2014 to February 3, 2014. One comment letter was received from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board containing a list of possible permits that could be required. SNC acknowledges receipt of the letter and will work with grantee to ensure all permits and regulatory requirements are satisfied. Previous environmental documentation was prepared and adopted by the Truckee Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest to satisfy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Staff is recommending that the Board make findings that there is no substantial evidence that that the project, with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the attached MND prepared for the project, along with the attached Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

**Letters of Support:**

- Lisa Wallace, Truckee River Watershed Council
- Edward D. Koch, United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Southwest Region
- J. R. Brown, University of California, Berkeley – Central Sierra Field Research Stations
- Tom Quinn, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
- Richard Anderson, County of Nevada, Board of Supervisors

Information and materials related to this grant project are maintained in SNC offices located at 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn, CA 95603, under the management and supervision of Matthew Daley.

**SNC Project #788 - American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break**
**Score:** 97 of 100
**Grantee Organization:** City of Auburn Fire Department
**Funding Request to the SNC:** $157,110

**Full Project Cost:** $288,206
**Other Funders:** City of Auburn Fire Department; Cal Fire; California State Parks; U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
**Link to Full Project Description:** Project 788 *(Note: This is a large PDF file and may take a significant amount of time to download. If you have difficulty seeing this information electronically, contact the SNC and we will make alternative arrangement for you to view the material.)*

**Project Summary:** The project is located on U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Lands adjacent to the city of Auburn on the rim of the American River Canyon and also adjacent to the Auburn State Recreation Area. The City of Auburn has been granted the rights and permissions to manage these lands by BOR. The project will complete fuel reduction treatments approximately 300-400 feet wide by 4000 feet long on 45-acres of forested land in high-threat wildfire areas. Ten acres of treatment will be completed on previously treated nearby sites needing further work. This project complements forest health treatments completed earlier with SNC grant funds and leverages significant efforts of community volunteers to protect the community and the watershed from the spread of fire. Vegetation will be removed by hand, using hand saws, pole saws and chainsaws. Cut materials will be chipped and scattered to stabilize exposed soils. In some instances, select pile burning may occur where invasive species can be eliminated simultaneously.

**CEQA:** This project is Categorically Exempt from CEQA under Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) of the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the project is attached. The city of Auburn has completed and filed a Notice of Exemption for the proposed project. If approved by the Board, staff will file the NOE with the State Clearinghouse.

**Letters of Support:**

- Doug LaMalfa, Congress of the United States, House of Representatives
- Jim Nielsen, California State Senate
- Drew F. Lessard, United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation

**SNC Project #786 - Soaproot Stewardship Project**
**Score:** 97 of 100
**Grantee Organization:** USDA Forest Service, Sierra National Forest, High Sierra Ranger District
**Funding Request to the SNC:** $349,788
**Full Project Cost:** $840,577
**Other Funders:** USDA Forest Service
**Link to Full Project Description:** Project 786 *(Note: This is a large PDF file and may take a significant amount of time to download. If you have difficulty seeing this information electronically, contact the SNC and we will make alternative arrangement for you to view the material.)*

**Project Summary:** The Soaproot Stewardship Project will provide watershed restoration treatments through the reduction of surface and ladder fuels which are necessary to return the Project area to a landscape resilient to the effects of catastrophic wildfire. The forest structure consists of dense, even-aged forests that are increasingly susceptible to severe wildfire, drought, insects, and disease. Severe storms and insect outbreaks in combination with fire suppression over the past century create a hazardous fuels situation, making high-severity fires more likely. The analysis area of the Soaproot Restoration Project Environmental Assessment was selected by the Dinkey Collaborative (a group of diverse stakeholders assembled to direct the planning approach for the project) to reduce hazardous fuels and restore ecological components within the Dinkey Landscape Restoration Project (DLRP). The DLRP was developed under the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP), and includes 154,000-acres on national forest and adjacent private lands.

The project is located in the Upper Big Creek sub-drainage; one of the Sierra National Forest's designated priority watersheds for restoration treatments. Big Creek, Summit Creek, and Providence Creek are the three main streams at risk from the negative effects of high intensity wildfires that could consume large areas of vegetation. Downstream from the Soaproot Stewardship area is Pine Flat Reservoir, the major reservoir on the Kings River providing valley farmers irrigation water and electricity production. Should the project area experience a large, high-severity fire in its present condition, resulting erosion and sedimentation from the area would reduce the amount of storage in Pine Flat Reservoir and the benefits resulting from this stored water. The project will reduce the chances of such an occurrence by reducing hazardous fuels and creating a more resilient forest in which fire can better play its naturally role in ecological processes. Maintaining improved conditions will be accomplished with future planned underburning and vegetative treatments.

The proposed vegetative treatments include:

1. 262.3-acres of biomass removal treatments
2. 470.5-acres of tractor piling slash using dozer
3. 305-acres of grapple piling slash using excavator

**CEQA:** The SNC, acting as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), prepared and circulated an Initial Study / draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for public review from January 3, 2014 to February 3, 2014. One comment letter was received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. SNC acknowledges receipt of the letter, and has reviewed and responded to the comments, finding that they were addressed in the previous environmental documentation for the project, prepared and adopted by the High Sierra Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest to satisfy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. Staff is recommending that the Board make findings that there is no substantial evidence that that the project, with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the

environment and adopt the attached MND prepared for the project, along with the attached Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

**Letters of Support:**

- Steven A. Brink, California Forestry Association
- Patrick Emmert, Private landowner adjacent to project area
- Tim Kroeker, Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Kirby D. Molen, Registered Professional Forester #2313
- Dinkey Forest Collaborative

Information and materials related to this grant project are maintained in SNC offices at 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn, CA 95603, under the management and supervision of Matthew Daley.

Attachments:
**Exhibit A – SNC and CEQA Documentation**

**Recommendation**
**Staff recommends the Board (a) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Sagehen Forest Habitat Restoration Project (SNC 773), with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Soaproot Stewardship Project (SNC 786), with mitigation measures, may have a significant effect on the environment and adopt the Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (c) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Plumas Community Energy Wood Processing Facility Project (SNC 780) and the American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break Project (SNC788); (d) authorize award of grants to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects and to file Notices of Determination for the Sagehen and Soaproot Projects.**

## Background

The Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT) was awarded grant #412, in the amount of $198,500 in the 2010-11 grant round. The grant's purpose was to conduct site evaluations and produce appraisals necessary to conserve three large ranches and one smaller one, lands strategically located to improve climate change resilience in the southern Sierra Nevada foothills. SRT's project manager has provided updates on the status of the project during the grant period and all reports have been received and approved. SRT has made substantial progress on three of the four properties originally included in the agreement. However, changes in land ownership make progress on one property infeasible and additional needs have been identified for the remaining properties.

## Current Status

The SRT is requesting a grant agreement amendment to remove one property and include two additional properties in the scope of work and to make several changes to the language in the deliverables, as well as extending the grant project completion date from March to December, 2014. Because this a substantive change to the scope of work described in Agreement #412, Board authorization in necessary.

Two large properties in Kern County would be added to the project with 16,000-acres cumulatively, 1,000-acres greater than the property that is no longer feasible in the current grant agreement. Proposed minor deliverable changes also include landowner letters of intent and conservation planning maps that can be more broadly used. In addition, the new scope of work includes the development of needs assessments for conservation plans or conservation plan amendments where approval of the conservation plans depends on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. These plans are necessary to seek implementation funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board.

These properties are among the Southern Sierra Partnership's (SSP) top six priorities for protection, based on results of the SSP's recent climate-adapted conservation planning effort. SNC Staff has reviewed the proposed additions and is satisfied that resource benefits associated with these properties meet or exceed those that would have been realized for the property originally included in the grant. No additional funding is being sought by the grantee.

Based on staff analysis, we are recommending that the proposed revised scope of work be approved, allowing the SRT to fulfill the original intent of the grant within the amount awarded.

**Next Steps**

Should the Board authorize the grant amendment, the SRT would be able to complete the deliverables on the remaining viable properties and the two additional ones, resulting in greater conservation benefits in terms of the potential number of acres protected and conserved. Upon Board authorization, staff will execute an amendment to that agreement consistent with the changes described above.

**Recommendation**

**Staff recommends the Board (a) concur that these changes do not trigger the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); (b) approve the reauthorization of this grant for the revised project, #412, Revised Pre-acquisition Work on Four Strategic Land Conservation Projects; (c) authorize staff to enter into the necessary agreements for this project.**

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
**SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program**
**Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Applicant:** | **SEQUOIA RIVERLANDS TRUST** |
| **Project Title:** | **-- REVISED --**<br>**PRE-ACQUISITION WORK ON FOUR STRATEGIC LAND CONSERVATION PROJECTS** |
| **Subregion:** | **SOUTH** |
| **County:** | **Tulare and Kern** |
| **SNC Funding:** | **$198,500.00** |
| **Total Project Cost:** | **$317,000.00** |
| **Application Number:** | **412** |
| **Final Score:** | **90.3** |

## REVISED PROJECT SCOPE

The purpose of the project is to conduct site evaluations, produce appraisals and carry out other landowner negotiations and partnership development necessary to conserve up to six properties, including one small property and five large ranches, lands strategically located to improve climate change resilience in the southern Sierra Nevada foothills.This scope has been modified given that a number of factors have resulted in one of the original properties identified for the project no longer being a viable candidate for protection. Two additional properties, with equal or greater resource values have been added to the scope. In addition, this project now includes language clarifying several deliverables including minor changes to protection plan approvals. An important appraisal to assist the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in protecting a portion of the Craig Ranch is also now included in this revised scope of work.

Three of the large properties are among the Southern Sierra Partnership's (SSP) top six priorities for protection, based on results of the SSP's recent climate-adapted conservation planning effort. The SSP's Regional Conservation Design shows the five large properties as being in Core Conservation Areas, and the smaller property is part of a Primary Buffer or Connector. The project will facilitate protection of roughly 40,000-acres of blue oak woodland, grassland, rare communities such as vernal pools and sycamore alluvial woodlands, habitat for and occurrences of numerous special status

species and many miles of high quality riparian corridors connecting these other habitats. In addition, these projects, when completed, will assist in protecting working landscapes in Tulare and Kern Counties. This project is supported by $118,543 of funding in addition to the SNC's funding support.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

| DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES | TIMELINE |
|---|---|
| **Conduct Site Assessments, Appraisals, Landowner Negotiations and Partnership Development as follows:**<br><br>**Mebane Ranch (now Rancheria Land & Livestock)**<br>• Assess need for Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) for riparian corridors feeding into the Tulare Lake Basin, including waterways flanking Mebane Ranch,and facilitate CAPP amendment or other documentation as needed to ensure eligibility for WCB funding.<br>• Collaborate with landowners to develop a conservation strategy and corresponding funding strategy for permanently protecting the ranch. Identify lands to be protected by SRT vs. other partners.<br>• Provide technical support for conservation buyer's negotiations with landowner and other partners for fee title acquisition.<br>• Completion of pre-acquisition work including:<br>  • biological field evaluation<br>  • environmental site assessment<br>  • title review<br>  • appraisal<br>  • conservation easement terms<br>  • maps for use in project planning, funding proposals and conservation agreements<br>• Apply for funding to acquire conservation easement(s) on lands identified for protection by SRT (actual closings subject to receipt of acquisition funding)<br>• Coordinate with landowners' and other partners' efforts to secure permanent protection of other portions of the ranch<br><br>**Hershey (Merritt) Ranch and Two Other South Sierra Ranches in the Poso Creek and Breckenridge Area**<br>• Facilitate DFG approval of draft Deer Creek Conceptual Area Protection Plan to enable future WCB funding<br>• Assess need for CAPP coverage for the Poso Creek and Breck-enridge area properties, and facilitate CAPP amendment or other documentation as needed to ensure eligibility for WCB funding (likely a combined effort with Rancheria L&L).<br>• Collaborate with conservation buyer to develop a conservation | March 2014-<br>December 2014 |

| | |
|---|---|
| strategy and corresponding funding strategy for permanently protecting the properties. Identify lands to be protected by SRT vs. other partners (as applicable). Continue contact with landowners to further develop interest in conserving their properties; develop conservation strategies and corresponding funding strategies with interested landowners.<br>• Provide technical support for conservation buyer's negotiations with landowner and other partners for fee title acquisition.<br>• Negotiate option to acquire conservation easement on lands identified for protection by SRT.<br>• Complete pre-acquisition work :<br>  • biological field evaluations<br>  • environmental site assessments<br>  • title reviews<br>  • appraisals<br>  • detailed negotiations on conservation easement terms; negotiation of agreements such as letters of intent, conservation easements, purchase and sale agreements<br>  • conservation easement map and maps for use in project planning, funding proposals and conservation agreements<br>• Apply for funding to acquire conservation easement(s) on lands to be protected by SRT (actual closings subject to receipt of acquisition funding and landowner acceptance of purchase offer)<br>• Coordinate with landowners' and other partners' efforts to secure permanent protection of remaining portions of their properties as part of a phased approach to add conservation easements with other leveraged funding sources (as applicable)<br><br>**Flynn Ranch**<br>• Negotiate option agreement for phased protection of the ranch through conservation easements. Develop conservation strategy and corresponding funding strategy for protecting the ranch, and identify lands to be protected by SRT.<br>• Draft a Conceptual Area Protection Plan for the White River corridor and submit to DFW for review and approval<br>• Complete pre-acquisition work for one conservation easement phase, including:<br>  • environmental site assessment<br>  • title review<br>  • appraisal<br>  • in-depth negotiations of conservation easement terms negotation of agreements, such as letter of intent, conservation easement, purchase and sale agreement<br>  • maps for use in project planning, funding proposals and conservation agreements | |

| | |
|---|---|
| • purchase and sale agreement<br>*(SRT has applied for acquisition funding for this phase. Actual closing is subject to receipt of that grant.)*<br>• Design a second conservation easement phase (select parcels, analyze conservation values, develop budget, outline easement terms, complete environmental site assessment), and apply for easement acquisition funds.<br><br>*(actual closings subject to receipt of acquisition funding and landowner acceptance of purchase offer)*<br><br>**Craig Ranch**<br>• Negotiate letter of intent and other agreements with estate trustees, BLM and other partners as needed to permanently conserve available ranch parcels<br>• Appraise value of available parcels per revised parcel map approved by the county<br>• Complete survey work to facilitate fee title acquisition of available parcels by partner organization<br>• Provide other pre-acquisition support to partner(s) acquiring fee title (e.g., previous due diligence information, landowner tie-in) | |
| Progress Report | June 2014 |
| Progress Report | December 2014 |
| Progress Report<br>Final Report | November 2014 |
| **FINAL PAYMENT/FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST** | **December 2014** |

## PROJECT COSTS

| **PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES** | **TOTAL SNC FUNDING** |
|---|---|
| Project related staff/personnel expense | $36,169.00 |
| Project related travel | $1,545.00 |
| Project related consultant expense | $102,977.00 |
| Project-related materials and supplies | $150.00 |
| Appraisals and Valuation Updates | $40,900.00 |
| Project Administration | $16,756.00 |
| **GRAND TOTAL** | **$198,500.00** |

## Background

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism (SNGT) MapGuide Project is a multi-faceted tourism promotion effort managed through a partnership of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), National Geographic, and the Sierra Business Council (SBC). Through the use of an interactive web site, a printed MapGuide, mobile phone applications (apps), and social media tools the project highlights and promotes California's Sierra Nevada Region as a tourism and recreation destination. The project supports the SNC's mandate to enhance tourism in the Sierra Nevada Region while also protecting and conserving the region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources.

Funding and in-kind support for the project has come from several sources, in addition to the SNC, including: The National Scenic Highways and Byways Administration, Sierra Business Council, Morgan Family Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks, Nevada Commission on Tourism, multiple Sierra counties, several Tribal Entities, Northern Sierra Partnership, and many more local businesses and service groups. The project has a list of more than 92 supporting entities that have formally endorsed the project, including all 22 Sierra Nevada counties.

In early 2012 the SNC purchased and launched mobile phone apps for iPhone and Android users providing access to all of the SNGT web site content while traveling in the Region. Users have the option of enabling GPS technology to enhance functionality of the apps for real-time updates based on their current location in the Sierra. The SNC paid $20,000 from its base budget allocation for development of the apps, and as a result acquired them both for unlimited use from National Geographic. More than 5,700 people have downloaded the apps, which are available for free to the public.

## Current Status

To date, the development of the project and its supporting products have been co-managed by the SNC and the SBC in conformity with National Geographic standards for all Geotourism Projects. Staffs from both organizations have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the future management strategy of the project. As the project has shifted from a construction phase to a business-maintenance phase the partners have agreed that consolidating management of business operations will lead to more efficient decision-making and use of staff resources. The MOU outlines the ongoing commitments of the SBC to manage the business aspects of the project consistent with National Geographic standards, and also identifies the ongoing roles of the SNC, such as: annual reviews of sponsorship and marketing plans, review and development of new web site content, and public outreach efforts.

The SBC has agreed to negotiate and enter into new agreements with National Geographic for web site hosting and maintenance. The SBC has also agreed to assume ongoing ownership and maintenance responsibilities of the mobile phone applications,

## Background

Sierra Nevada wildfires have been increasing in size and severity over the last decades and most scientists predict that this will continue under current forest conditions. There is currently excess biomass 'fuel' (mostly brush and small diameter trees) built up in the forest. One means to reduce large, catastrophic fire is through forest restoration treatments involving removal of biomass.

In instances where treatments include the removal of saw logs, often biomass can be economically removed as part of the overall project. However, creating value in the removed biomass will increase forest treatment and more specifically fuel reduction at the scale necessary to reduce fire size and severity. The biomass can be used locally to add economic value to this byproduct to cover the costs of collection, processing, and transport. Recent state planning efforts and policies support the use of biomass to create renewable energy while at the same time protecting the state's valuable forests, and the region's communities, from catastrophic wildfire. Development of additional biomass power generation facilities in the Sierra Nevada Region that utilize forest byproduct will provide a ready market for biomass.

Recent State policy and planning has focused on supporting small scale facilities distributed in fire threat areas. The 2012 Bioenergy Action Plan includes a broad array of action items related to the promotion of forest bioenergy. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is identified as one of the key responsible agencies for these action items, particularly in assisting forested communities to develop small scale forest bioenergy facilities. Shortly following the adoption of the Bioenergy Action Plan, legislation requiring large utilities to purchase bioenergy was signed into law. Senate Bill 1122 (Rubio, Chpt 612 Stats. 2012) requires the state's three large investor owned utilities to collectively purchase 50 MW of energy from new small scale (3 MW or less) bioenergy projects using byproduct of sustainable forest management. Establishing 50 MW will take a concerted and coordinated effort and SNC has been playing a lead role in the development of forest bioenergy facilities, influencing policies to ensure they support bioenergy, funding and securing funds for project development and developing tools to support these projects.

## Current Status

SNC Staff has been providing comments and meeting with key State agencies to ensure that natural resources, and more specifically forestry, is included in the California Air Resources Board's Cap and Trade Revenue Investment Plan. The investment plan does include forestry and to help better define this component of the plan, SNC coordinated developing a forestry and bioenergy funding proposal with Cal Fire and US Forest Service. SNC and its partners met with the Governor's office, Cal EPA, California Natural Resources Agency and other key decision makers to discuss this proposal. The Governor's budget which proposes allocation of a half billion dollars of Cap and Trade revenue, includes $50 million for forestry. Cal Fire is designated to manage these funds and is proposing to supplement their existing funding programs as well as, possibly designate funds to forest bioenergy facility development and a

**Matthew Renda**
**mrenda@theunion.com**

Back to:
November 21, 2013

# Study: Sierra Nevada wildland fires larger, more intense

The Rim fire in 2013 charred a massive swathe of forest in the southern reaches of the Sierra Nevada.

- «
- 1 of 1 images
- »

---

NEVADA COUNTY, Calif. — The current condition of forests in the Sierra Nevada abets larger fires that burn more intensely and with a higher degree of catastrophic consequences, a new study has determined.

“The past few decades have seen a significant increase in the size of high-severity fires and the acreage subjected to catastrophic burn,” said the authors of the “Fire Threat study” sponsored by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and released in September.

“A combination of over 100 years of human encroachment into the wildlands and fire suppression led to a drastic reduction in natural fire on the landscape and changed the character of the forest, much of which has filled in with heavy undergrowth, which is now much more prone to high-severity fire,” authors said.

While recent precipitation throughout the Sierra points to the end of fire season, officials continue to express concern it will not suffice to quell fire danger.

“This rain is a good thing, but by the end of the week, a warming trend is expected, and a northward wind pattern will dry conditions back out,” said Calfire spokesman Daniel Berlant. “We are keeping our staffing levels up.”

On Nov. 13, the National Weather Service noted that it had rained only 22 days in the region in 2013, while the average is 63.5 days a year.

“Another way of looking at it: If it were to rain every day for the rest of the calendar year, we would only catch up to normal,” weather officials posted on the agency’s Facebook page.

However, in California, rainfall is measured in water years, which begin in October and run through the end of September.

While the start of the 2013-14 water year has been arid, the dearth of rainfall is not atypical, said Johnnie Powell, forecaster for the NWS.

“The rain doesn’t really start arriving until late November, on average,” Powell said. “If we’re having this discussion at the end of December, then we’re worried. But just because we are starting slow doesn’t mean we won’t finish fast.”

The 2012-13 water year was well below normal, featuring a snowpack that hovered around half of normal measurements for much of the year.

The dry winter gave rise to a busy wildland fire season throughout California and particularly in the Sierra Nevada, which witnessed the largest fire in the history of the mountain range.

The Rim fire, which began Aug. 17, was caused by an illegal campfire started by an as-of-yet publicly unidentified hunter. The blaze grew exponentially, burning for two months before being listed as officially contained Oct. 24.

Approximately 257,314 acres, or about 400 square miles, were consumed in Tuolumne and Mariposa counties near Yosemite National Park, representing the third largest fire on record in the state.

From Jan. 1 through Oct. 19, 6,680 wildland fires were sparked in California, easily surpassing the 4,734 fires in 2012 and the 4,715 fires averaged from 2007 to 2012.

“We saw a 40 percent increase in fire responses due to the abnormally dry winter,” Berlant said. “There were a lot more fires.”

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy study makes the case that dry conditions are only one variable in a complex formula.

About 150 years ago, low-severity fire was a frequent occurrence in the forests of the Sierra, the study states. The frequent moderate fires were a boon to the landscape because they bolstered forest health by thinning out small trees, removing fuel accumulation and eradicating insect pests and curtailing tree disease.

Human encroachments into the wildland and an emphasis on fire suppression have fostered conditions that present an increased risk to both human habitation and infrastructure, as well as the forest ecosystem, the study states.

The conservancy conducted an in-depth investigation into all 22 counties within the SNC region, which includes nearly 25 million acres, 212 communities, more than 600,000 residents and a flourishing tourism industry that attracts more than 50 million recreation visit days per year.

Of that land, about 68 percent (17,500,000 acres) is classified as high, very high or extreme fire danger. Only 12 percent is classified as little to no fire danger.

Federal land managers own and maintain 60 percent of the land within the region, and two-thirds of that land has a fire danger classification of at least high.

The subregion encompassing Nevada County, which also includes Yuba, Placer and El Dorado counties, circumscribes 2.5 million acres, 67 percent of which contains fire danger listed as high or above, the study states.

©2005 - 2014 Swift Communications, Inc.

November 21, 2013 - Auburn — The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board will meet in Jackson on December 4-5 to consider authorizing $1 million for projects that contribute to the restoration of the area affected by the Rim Fire. Activities will result in the protection and restoration of watersheds impacted by the fire and will be funded by Proposition 84, passed by voters in 2006.

“This is the largest fire in the recorded history of the Sierra Nevada and it has implications for all of California,” said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. “Preliminary estimates suggest that nearly 100,000 acres burned at high intensity, larger than most Sierra fires in their entirety. Our Board will be considering the opportunity to invest some of our limited resources to the important restoration efforts needed for this area.”

The Board may also take action to award a grant for a recommended project under the 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands grant program, and will hear updates from SNC staff on the Agricultural Lands and Ranches System Indicators Report, Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis, and Abandoned Mine Lands Initiative.

On Dec. 4, the Board will tour projects highlighting the challenges posed by abandoned mine lands, and will make a stop at BLM’s Mokelumne River Access to learn more about the Mokelumne Coast-to-Crest Trail. The field trip is scheduled from 1:00-5:00 p.m. and will begin at The National Hotel in Historic Downtown Jackson. A reception will be held at Stanley’s Steakhouse in The National Hotel following the tour at 5:30 p.m.

The public is invited to attend all SNC events; however, lunch and transportation are not provided. Complete information on the meeting agenda, staff reports and field trip are available online at www.SierraNevada.ca.gov .

---

About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Governing Board Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency whose mission is to improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC, which receives no general fund tax dollars, has awarded over $50 million in grants for projects to protect and enhance the health of California’swatersheds by improving forest health, remediating mercury contamination from abandoned mines, protecting critical natural resources and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006. The SNC Governing Board meets quarterly around the Sierra Nevada Region, which spans 25 million acres, encompasses all or part of 22 counties, and runs from the Oregon border on the north, to Kern County.

Arnold, CA
At 1:53 PM PST
Clear
52°F
VARIABLE 6 G 17 MP
WeatherForYou.com

# THEPINETREE.NET

The Celebrated News of Calaveras County and Beyond

Murphys, CA
At 1:53 PM PST
Mostly Cloudy
63°F
VARIABLE 5 MPH
WeatherForYou.com



**Coming Soon...**

**Tuesday, Feb 11**

| | |
|---|---|
| **12:00 AM** | Trip to Israel with First Baptist Church of Angels Camp |
| **All Day** | My Heart Supports Hospice ~ Feb 1st-28th |
| **02:00 PM** | SMUG FEBRUARY MEETING TO ADDRESS MEMBERS' COMPUTER QUESTIONS |
| **04:30 PM** | Wine Maker's Night at Alchemy, Murphys - 209-728-0700 |
| **05:00 PM** | Angels Camp Weight Watchers |

Posted by: thepinetree on 11/23/2013 09:32 AM Updated by: thepinetree on 11/23/2013 09:34 AM
Expires: 01/01/2018 12:00 AM

Like 0 Tweet 0

:

Mark Twain Medical Center. A Dignity Health Member
Voted Best Medical Center
Family Medical Centers
Angels Camp • Arnold • Copperopolis
San Andreas • Valley Springs
Call for Appointment: 754.2968

**$1 Million for Rim Fire Restoration to be Considered by Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board**

*Auburn, CA…The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Governing Board will meet in Jackson on December 4-5 to consider authorizing $1 million for projects that contribute to the restoration of the area affected by the Rim Fire. Activities will result in the protection and restoration of watersheds impacted by the fire and will be funded by Proposition 84, passed by voters in 2006...*

SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

"This is the largest fire in the recorded history of the Sierra Nevada and it has implications for all of California," said SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham. "Preliminary estimates suggest that nearly 100,000 acres burned at high intensity, larger than most Sierra fires in their entirety. Our Board will be considering the opportunity to invest some of our limited resources to the important restoration efforts needed for this area."

The Board may also take action to award a grant for a recommended project under the 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands grant program, and will hear updates from SNC staff on the Agricultural Lands and Ranches System Indicators Report, Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis, and Abandoned Mine Lands Initiative.

On Dec. 4, the Board will tour projects highlighting the challenges posed by abandoned mine lands, and will make a stop at BLM's Mokelumne River Access to learn more about the Mokelumne Coast-to-Crest Trail. The field trip is scheduled from 1:00-5:00 p.m. and will begin at The National Hotel in Historic Downtown Jackson. A reception will be held at Stanley's Steakhouse in The National Hotel following the tour at 5:30 p.m.

The public is invited to attend all SNC events; however, lunch and transportation are not provided. Complete information on the meeting agenda, staff reports and field trip are available online at www.SierraNevada.ca.gov.

About the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Governing Board

Created in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a state agency whose mission is to improve the

Mark Twain Medical Center. A Dignity Health Member
Family Medical Centers
Angels Camp • Arnold
Copperopolis • San Andreas
Valley Springs
Same Day Appointments
Call 209-754-2968

Century 21 Sierra Properties
c-21sierraproperties.com
Wine Country Murphys (800) 237-0248
The Mountains Arnold (800) 523-8758

BEAR VALLEY REAL ESTATE

BEAR VALLEY CROSS COUNTRY
BearValleyXC.com
209.753.2834
Nature, Family, Fitness

Cedar Creek REALTY INC.

Gerard Insurance Services
Our job is to save your money
AUTO HOME COMMERCIAL
209.754.1490

BRAND SOURCE
Middleton's

**Wednesday, Feb 12**

**All Day** Trip to Israel with First Baptist Church of Angels Camp

**All Day** My Heart Supports Hospice ~ Feb 1st-28th

**05:30 PM** Spaghetti Western Dinner and Movie, Mokelumne Hill - 209-286-1401

**06:00 PM** Calaveras County Republican Party (CCRP) February Meeting

**06:30 PM** The Bombadils Live at Powderbears

**06:30 PM** Overeaters Anonymous

**Thursday, Feb 13**

**All Day** Trip to Israel with First Baptist Church of Angels Camp

**All Day** My Heart Supports Hospice ~ Feb 1st-28th

**06:00 PM** Ladies Wine Night in Jamestown February 13th

**06:00 PM** Debtors Anonymous

**Friday, Feb 14**

**All Day** Trip to Israel with First Baptist Church of Angels Camp

**All Day** My Heart Supports Hospice ~ Feb 1st-28th

**05:00 PM** Lagorio's BBQ Fridays

**05:00 PM** "Zucca After Hours is open

environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC, which receives no general fund tax dollars, has awarded over $50 million in grants for projects to protect and enhance the health of California's watersheds by improving forest health, remediating mercury contamination from abandoned mines, protecting critical natural resources and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Funding for these projects comes from Proposition 84 passed by voters in 2006.

The SNC Governing Board meets quarterly around the Sierra Nevada Region, which spans 25 million acres, encompasses all or part of 22 counties, and runs from the Oregon border on the north, to Kern County.

**Comments - Make a comment**

The comments are owned by the poster. We are not responsible for its content. We value free speech but remember this is a public forum and we hope that people would use common sense and decency. If you see an offensive comment please email us at news@thepinetree.net

Nested ▼ Oldest First ▼ Refresh

**What's Related**

**These might interest you as well**

**Local News**

**Tuolumne County**

- TCBC & TCEDA Sponsoring Executive Speaker Series
- "With Vision There Is Hope" Bruce Vincent to Keynote TuCARE's Annual...
- Caltrans Reports on How it's Doing its Job & Where it Needs to Improve
- Rural Counties Thank U.S. Senators Feinstein and Boxer for Extension of...
- Great Flooring Specials at Pinnell's Carpet One in Angels Camp & S...
- Dodge Ridge To Open Limited Terrain On Thursday
- Traffic Advisory State Route 120 From Old Priest Grade To Hardin Flat ...
- Great Service Specials at Mother Lode Motors!
- Dire Straits Members Form "The Straits" and Black Oak Casino Resort...
- Dawn E. Hartwig, 44 From Angels Camp Dies in Rawhide Road Accident. U...
- Merced River Wild & Scenic Plan.Open House at Yosemite Valley Visitor ...
- Forest Seeks Comments on State OHV Grant Applications - Stanislaus Nat...
- Birth Center Taking Special Precautions to Protect Newborns from Flu
- Biggest Loser Contest Providing Motivation for Medical Center Employees
- Ladies Wine Night At Brice Station and Others in Jamestown February 13th
- Heavy "Petting" & Drug Charges for Kenneth McLeod
- Senior Prom in Sonora
- Mother Lode Round-Up Queen Contestant: Evon Meckler
- Mother Lode Round-Up Queen Contestant: Rachelle Snitchler
- Glazed Salmon & Rice Pilaf (Elémentaire TV) Episode 16: P - Persillade

**Business**

- Donation to Calaveras Community Foundation
- Hospice of Amador & Calaveras Receives $2,500 Grant for Seniors in Cal...
- Calaveras Humane Society Gives Back to a Community That Has Given so Much...
- Order Your Snow Plow or a Whole New Tractor From Joes Services 209.754...
- PG&E Contributes To Economic Development Efforts In County
- CCWD Board is Back in Action on Wednesday
- Expedited Rim Fire Salvage Logging Clears First House
- Sierra Pacific Awarded Over $24 Million in Moonlight Fire Case
- Investment Solutions At Stevenson Wealth Management
- Business Profile...Linton Business Consulting! Make 2014 Your Best Year...
- Country Cloth Has A Great Grand Opening at Their New North Main Location
- The CWA Presents Behind the Bottle June 20-22, 2014
- Business Association to Highlight N. Main Street Businesses....Tonight!!!
- OARS Turns 45 - Honors Martin Litton, Dories & Sequoias
- The Budget & Economic Outlook: 2014 to 2024 From The CBO
- What Can The Power Of An Hour Do?

BISTRO ESPRESSO
Come for the Coffee!
Leave with a Smile!
PINNACLE PHYSICAL THERAPY
CHATOM VINEYARDS
Bear Valley Mountain Resort
EBBETTS PASS SCENIC BYWAY
SIERRA NEVADA LOGGING MUSEUM

Mountain Democrat

Monday, February 10, 2014 PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA 99 CENTS



# Majority of Sierra fire threat high

**By Cole Mayer**

From page A1 | November 29, 2013 | 2 Comments

A September report by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy shows that the Central Subregion, of which El Dorado County is part of, has more than half of the acres in the subregion being of "high and above" threat.

The report, "Fire Threat," by lead author Mark Stanley with data analysis by Steve Beckwitt, shows that of the approximately 25.5 million acres of the forest in the state, about 17.5 million acres are categorized as "high and above" for fire threat, or about 68 percent of the forest. Of the 2.5 million acres in the Central Region, comprised of parts of El Dorado, Placer, Nevada and Yuba counties, 1.7 million acres, about 67 percent, is "high and above." The simple definition of fire threat, the report says, is "the possibility of a fire occurring based on the history of fire occurrence and the potential damage based on the behavior a fire may exhibit."

Cal Fire tracks the areas in four classes: Extreme, very high, high and moderate. There is also non-fuel, meaning there is little to no threat. The report notes that high and above are grouped together as they are, as far as the SNC is concerned, functionally the same.

Subregions across the state have high fire threats, the report reads. "The North, North Central and South Central Subregions average about 75 percent in the high and above fire threat classes, while about two-thirds of the Central and South Subregions is in that threat range ... The landscape of the Central Subregion, which contains the bulk of the region's population, has been much more modified than other subregions. The South Subregion is likely at slightly lower overall threat because it has the highest elevations and contains the most area at little or no fire threat, which is primarily high alpine terrain with little vegetation. The large area of national park land is the south may also play into the figures. Only 48 percent of the East Subregion is in the high and above threat range, due mostly to lack of heavy vegetation to carry large fires due to dry conditions on the east slope of the Sierra and in the Owens Valley."

The Central Subregion contains the highest amount of wildland urban interface, or WUI, of all the subregions. About 640,000 acres, or about 25 percent of the total acres in the subregion, is WUI. Of that, about 541,500 acres, or 85 percent, are in the high and above threat range. The Central Subregion accounts for 39 percent of the total WUI in the region.

"The portion of Sierra wildfire that occurs each year that is in the WUI is generally fairly small ... in a typical year since 1998, 1 to 3 percent of total land burned in the Sierra is in the WUI. The one major exception in the past 15 years was 2004, when nearly 10 percent of the burned acreage was in WUI, though this was overall a modest fire year."

## Recent Posts

- 2014 Hyundai Sonata
- 2014 Hyundai Sonata — making Beethoven jealous
- Print edition, Wednesday, February 12, 2014
- Courtney Richmond
- Sara Weimer
- The Food Bank needs early risers
- A Chocolate Affair
- River roars back to life
- River roars back to life
- El Dorado, Diamond plans percolating

## Subscribe via Email

Enter your email address to subscribe and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Email Address

Subscribe

Last year, about 475,000 acres in the Sierra Nevada Region burned; of that, only 1,075 acres were in the WUI, or 0.23 percent. Despite this, the Central Subregion's WUI has not been affected much by fires, and "the cumulative amount of WUI burned over the past 15 years has actually been less than some of the other Subregions, and certainly a much smaller percentage of the WUI than any other Subregion." Just under 7,000 acres of Central Subregion WUI burned between 1998 and 2012, more than only the South and East Subregions.

Changing climate in the Sierra Nevada Region has not helped with fire threats.

"Restoring the health of the forest and reducing fire threat will take a significant amount of time (most likely decades) and increased investment," the report concludes. "These Fire Threat Indicators can help us track the progress that is being made in terms of on-the-ground efforts to improve forest conditions and reduce fire threat over time and help inform strategic investment." A methodology is currently being developed to that end, to help characterize and track the severity of fires in the future.

## Cole Mayer

View all my stories Email Me

### LEAVE A COMMENT

## Discussion | 2 comments

**Walking Tall** November 29, 2013 - 7:57 am

Hear that Ray "High and Above" that means SET NO Fires Ray, oh wait you can't read so sorry....

Reply | Report abusive comment

**Clyde Needham** November 29, 2013 - 6:03 pm

Somebody take away Baby Rays matches.

Reply | Report abusive comment

## News

Heard over the back fence: Give blood in Georgetown
By Bob Billingsley | From Page: B1

Habla Español y Inglés? Be a poll worker
By News Release | From Page: B1, 35 Comments

BOS tackles the function and life span of a 'committee'
By Chris Daley | From Page: A1, 5 Comments

McCavitt found guilty
By Cole Mayer | From Page: A1, 11 Comments

A rescuer always rescues

Camera Club holds print contest
By News Release | From Page: B1

Be aware of avalanche danger
By Edc Sheriff's | From Page: B1, 1 Comment

Bigelow provides California's drought info
By Kirk Kimmerlshue | From Page: B1, 2 Comments

Harris in holding pattern
By Cole Mayer | From Page: A1

Cameron Park gets new health center

< Back to All News

## Sierra Nevada Conservancy Releases Annual Report

Posted: Dec. 30, 2013 4:50 PM PST

Once a year the Sierra Nevada Conservancy releases a report providing an overview of what is needed to help restore the Sierra to ecological health and supply abundant clean water to Californians. This year's report contains five key highlights several which directly impact Nevada County. Assistant Executive Officer for the Conservancy, Joan Keegan says addressing the impact of legacy mining is one highlight. On grant project is at Combie Reservoir.
Click here to listen to Joan Keegan

The project is also a pilot for other reservoirs that have dams downstream from past mining activity where sediments contain high levels of Mercury.
A second project is at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park.
Click here to listen to Joan Keegan

Izzy Martin and the Sierra Fund is actively involved with the Malakoff project as well as education efforts on mercury in the food chain.
Click here to listen to Joan Keegan

Another highlight of the report that relates to Nevada county is the use of forest biomass to create energy. Keegan says that today's forests are overstocked and a threat to large scale forest fires like the Rim Fire.
Click here to listen to Joan Keegan

Other highlights of the annual report include the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative which is a collaborative approach to solving disagreements over forest management and environmental protection.

The full report is available on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy website.

Tom Fitzsimmons
Rita Stevens
Dave Bear
Paul Haas
Geoff Flynn
Hollie Grimaldi-Flores
Jan Fishler
Jon Katis
Rick Hansen
Gary Jacobson
Pat Day

To listen to the interview, visit http://knco.com/sierra-nevada-conservancy-releases-annual-report/

# Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Sponsord by:
VIC'S TOWING Where the customer and community has come first for 65 years. (209) 532-GLAD

December 16, 2013



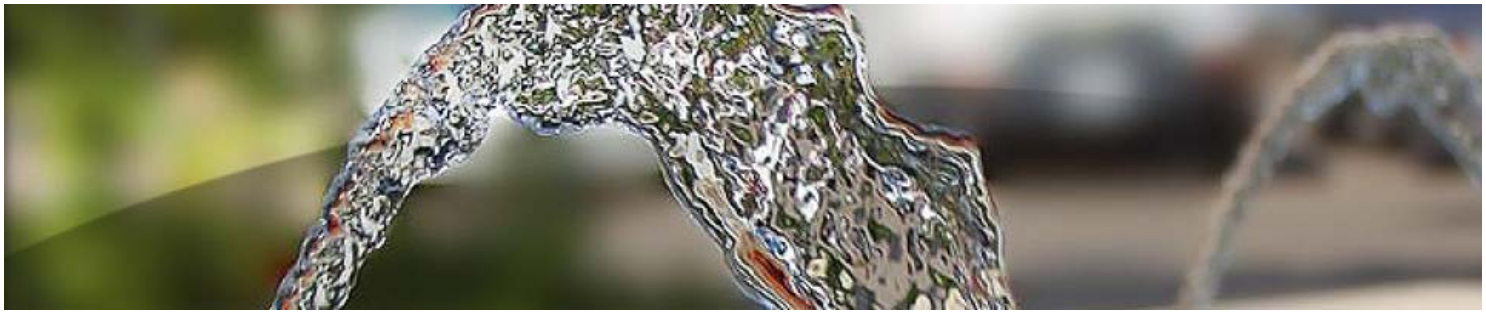
Mother Lode Views focused on how the state's Sierra Nevada Conservancy tries to find a balance on forest issues between environmental and commercial interests. The show featured Executive Director Jim Branham. He also spoke about what the state agency is doing directly related to the Rim Fire aftermath.

Segment 1: Download
Segment 2: Download
Segment 3: Download

Audio segments are available as MP3 files. Click to listen to a segment or right-click on Download and select "Save Target/Link As" to download the MP3 file to your PC or audio player.

Has your current propane company...
• Emptied your wallet?
• Forgotten to re-fill your tank?
CHOOSE Kamps PROPANE
Call us for service 209-532-6638
Come see us in Sonora or
Click here for more information
myNEWS
Keep Your Lamps... by jessievalentine
Cheap Flights to Bangkok
www.CheapOair.com
Call Toll Free: 1-888-516-7925
AT&T U-verse TV + Internet $59/mo. for 12 mos. with
AdChoices Walmart

To listen to the interview, visit http://www.mymotherlode.com/multimedia/audio/2370832/Sierra-Nevada-Conservancy.html



MAVEN'S NOTEBOOK

*A water, science and policy blog*

# Assembly water bond hearing focuses on north state needs

Categories: Water

by Maven

*December 5, 2013*

From Assemblymember Anthony Rendon:

> "Assemblyman Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood), chair of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee convened a hearing in Redding at the request of Assembly Member Brian Dahle (R-Bieber) to discuss regional water issues, the looming statewide water crisis, and the state Assembly's water bond proposal. Assembly Members Adam Gray (D-Modesto) and Mariko Yamada (D-Davis) also attended. The hearing convened in the Shasta County Board of Supervisors' Chambers in Redding focused on the state's aging water system, drought and the effects of climate change that threaten access to clean, affordable, and reliable sources of water for residents and industry.
>
> In addition, panelists included: Jim Branham, Executive Officer of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy; Ed McLaughlin, Board Member of the Third District Agricultural Association; Jeff Sutton, General Manager of the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority; and, Fritz Durst, Chair of the Sites Reservoir Joint Powers Authority.
>
> California's water system serves over 30 million people and irrigates nearly 6 million acres of farmland. The EPA reports that federal water quality standards are not being met on over half of California's 3 million acres of lakes, bays, wetlands and estuaries and 30,000 miles of the state's shoreline, streams and rivers. The state hasn't passed a water bond since 2006 and it's clear that urgent public investments are needed to increase our future water supply reliability.
>
> "I applaud Assemblyman Dahle for calling for this hearing. The majority of our water originates in the North State mountains where the snowpack serves as the State's largest reservoir. The watershed and ecosystems of the Sacramento Valley Region sustains the regional and statewide environment, population, and economy while providing a habitat for migratory Chinook salmon and irrigating the fields that are key stops for many birds travelling along the Pacific Flyway," stated Assembly Member Anthony Rendon, chair of the Water, Parks & Wildlife Committee.
>
> "I am pleased that the Assembly Water Committee has decided to come to Northern California. I am glad to hear from the communities where water plays such a vital role in our economy and our way of life. I appreciate Chairman Rendon's leadership on taking on this important issue," Stated Assembly Member Brian Dahle.
>
> For more information on the Assembly Water Bond process and proposal, visit http://awpw.assembly.ca.gov/waterbond

XFINITY TRIPLE PLAY
GET A GREAT OFFER
30-DAY MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE
xfinity
LEARN MORE

myMOTHERLODE.COM
YOUR GATEWAY TO CALIFORNIA'S GOLD COUNTRY
STAR 92.7
KZSQ 92.7 FM Sonora
Josh and Maryann in the morning
Weekdays 5:30am to 9am



# Million In Rim Fire Recovery

Blake Elliott Insurance Agency
(209) 928-3471
Allied Insurance
a Nationwide Insurance® company

*Sierra Nevada Conservancy Logo*
*Enlarge*

December 09, 2013 03:19 pm
Tracey Petersen , MML News Reporter

Share Tweet g+1
Print Email Share
Comments
13 Comments
Read Comments
Post Comment

Jackson, CA -- The Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board approved a one million dollar fund for the Rim Fire recovery efforts.

The grant funding will go towards projects that will improve forest and watershed health in the burned area. The money would come from the remainder of the $54 million Proposition 84 funds.

"Having this investment from the Conservancy is a wonderful example of a federal-state partnership that recognizes the important benefits lands managed by the Forest Service provide to all Californians," says Susan Skalski, Forest Supervisor for the Stanislaus National Forest.

Tuolumne County Supervisor Sherri Brennan added, "We are certainly appreciative of this funding from the Conservancy and look forward to working with them to ensure that we maximize the benefits for our county and our forest."

Proposition 84 was passed by voters in 2006.

Written by Tracey Petersen

If you see breaking news, traffic or weather contact us at news@clarkebroadcasting.com or the News Hotline at 532-6397

If you have a photo regarding this news story or any Mother Lode News Story please email news@clarkebroadcasting.com Upload your video or photo to http://www.ugclocal.com/mymotherlode

Celebrate the Great Indoors!
BLACK OAK CASINO RESORT
1-877-747-8777

Cheap Flights From $95*
cheapoair.com/Call@1-888-516-7925
Millions of Cheap Flights on Over 450 Airlines. Low Fare Promise!

## Other Local News

- Tuolumne Schools Provide Fitness Example
- Mother Lode Fair Appointees
- High Speed Chase Results In Arrest
- Columbia College's Accreditation Reaffirmed
- Two Calaveras Residents Die From Flu
- Governor Announces Several More Appointments
- Dense Fog Advisory Issued For The Central Valley
- Subcommittee Hearing Addresses Drought

## Other News

**Recommended For You**

- Snow In The Mother Lode This

**From Around The Web**

- Vanessa Williams' Surprising

# Rim Fire recovery effort gets a $1 million boost

**Enterprise report | Posted: Tuesday, December 17, 2013 9:22 am**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy, an organization dedicated to improving the environmental, economic and social wellbeing of the Sierra Nevada region, has allocated $1 million in grant funding to aid in the Rim Fire recovery effort.

“Whether it’s watershed recovery or reforestation, everything in the forest is connected,” said Jim Branham, the conservancy’s executive director. “We view watershed health, stream health and forest health as community health.”

In the late summer and early fall of 2013, the Rim Fire scorched more than 250,000 acres of land in Mariposa and Tuolumne counties. It is believed that the intense, fast-moving wildfire was sparked by a campfire started by a hunter, who is expected to be charged by the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Sacramento.

With more than a quarter-million acres incinerated, public agencies and private landowners have worked diligently to restore the land to a semblance of health. The Stanislaus National Forest has worked with a Burn Agency Emergency Response team to assess which fire-damaged trees pose the greatest threats to forest visitors and roadways. The Stanislaus National Forest is now entering the second phase of its Rim Fire recovery plan by holding public workshops to educate the public and obtain feedback on its proposal to move forward with tree removal and road repairs.

In the private sector, Sierra Pacific Industries, a forest products company based in Anderson, has shifted its logging operations from green timber to burn timber in the wake of the Rim Fire. SPI is the largest private landowner in the state. More than 10,000 acres of its lands were damaged by the Rim Fire.

Specific details on how to use the grant money are still being discussed, but Branham indicated that his organization’s decision to help with the Rim Fire recovery effort was an easy one.

“The magnitude and intensity of the Rim Fire had a tremendous impact,” he said. “We could see other fires like this happening again, so by helping with the (Rim Fire) recovery effort, we will help prevent future incidents.”

Funding for the grant comes from Proposition 84, which was approved by California voters in 2006. Proposition 84 authorized that $5.388 billion be used for water conservation efforts, water quality, waterway and natural resource protection and other related projects. Because of the provisions of Proposition 84, the conservancy’s $1 million grant will focus on water-related recovery efforts.

“There are many benefits to helping watersheds,” Branham said, adding that the benefits include everything from improved air quality to expanded recreational opportunities.

As the Rim Fire recovery project goes forward, the conservancy will work closely with the forest service, the National Park Service, Tuolumne County officials, Yosemite-Stanislaus Solutions and other stakeholders to decide how the grant money will be allocated.

“People are really starting to come together to make the forest a healthier ecosystem,” said Brittany Covich, communications and outreach coordinator for the conservancy.

GET PREPARED NOW: Widespread Power Outages Likely Share See Friends At Risk



News

# 5 Shocking Facts About California's Drought

By Chris Dolce | Published: Jan 9, 2014, 2:23 PM EST | weather.com

## #1: Record Low Snowpack

Overlay

Autoplay ON OFF

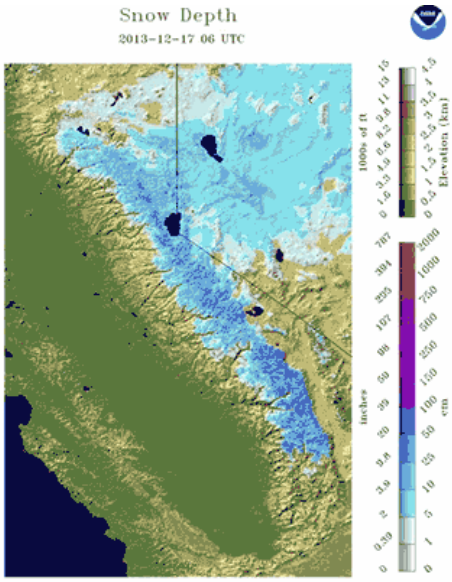
On Jan. 3, California's Department of Water Resources released its first snow survey of the season, and the details weren't good.

**According to the report**, the water content of the snowpack statewide was just 20 percent of average for early January. This ties January 2012 as the driest in historical records for this time of year.

The state's mountain snowfall plays a big role in the water supply for California, particularly in the Sierra Nevada.

**California's Sierra Nevada Conservancy** says that 60 percent of the state's developed water supply originates from this high mountain range that runs north to south near the Nevada border. As of Jan. 8, snowpack in the Sierra was only 19 to 29 percent of average.

In early December, about 88 percent of the Sierra was covered by snow after a cold air mass brought snow to very low elevations. A month later on Jan. 9, a paltry 21.3 percent of the Sierra Nevada was covered by snow. The animation to the right shows the massive reduction in snow cover from early December to early January.




Animation showing the Sierra Nevada snowpack Dec. 1, 2013 to Jan. 9, 2014. After a brief expansion in early December, snowpack has decreased considerably.

NEXT> Extreme Drought

ADVERTISEMENT

Most Popular
Today This Week
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Breathtaking Photos of the Coldest City in the World
Funny Faces of the Sochi Olympics (PHOTOS)
Ruins of the Rust Belt: Haunting Photos of Abandoned Buildings by Seph Lawless
Fashion on Ice: Outrageous Figure Skating Outfits (PHOTOS)
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Highlights from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games (PHOTOS)
Awesome Black and White Photos of the Early Days of Winter Olympics
This Bangladeshi Boy Is a Better Human Being Than Most of Us
PHOTOS: 2014 Winter Olympics Spills and Wipeouts

ADVERTISEMENT

GET PREPARED NOW: Widespread Power Outages Likely Share See Friends At Risk

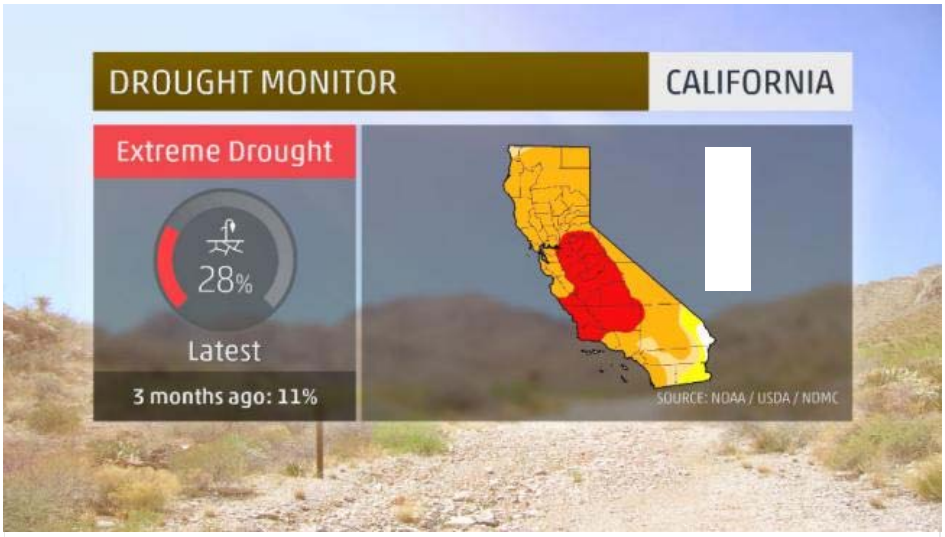


News

# 5 Shocking Facts About California's Drought

By Chris Dolce | Published: Jan 9, 2014, 2:23 PM EST | weather.com

## #2: Extreme Drought Highest Ever Recorded in the Winter




According to the U.S. Drought Monitor released on Jan. 7, 28 percent of California was in extreme drought. California's Central Valley, where agriculture is a big industry, is the epicenter for this second worst of the four possible drought categories.

This is the highest percentage of extreme drought in California during the winter months from December through February dating back to 2000. In addition, only one other time since 2000 has extreme drought covered a higher percentage of the state. In late summer 2007, this figure reached as high as 35 percent.

Moderate to severe drought covers 88 percent of the state as of Jan. 7. Although this is a bit lower than the 94 percent reported during summer 2013, the current percentage remains higher than any other time from 2000 to 2012.

NEXT> Huge Rainfall Needed

ADVERTISEMENT

Most Popular
Today This Week
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Breathtaking Photos of the Coldest City in the World
Funny Faces of the Sochi Olympics (PHOTOS)
Ruins of the Rust Belt: Haunting Photos of Abandoned Buildings by Seph Lawless
Fashion on Ice: Outrageous Figure Skating Outfits (PHOTOS)
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Highlights from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games (PHOTOS)
Awesome Black and White Photos of the Early Days of Winter Olympics
This Bangladeshi Boy Is a Better Human Being Than Most of Us
PHOTOS: 2014 Winter Olympics Spills and Wipeouts

1 2 3 ... 5

More from Weather.com
300-year-old, $5M Treasure RECOVERED
New Jersey Family's Homemade Igloo is the Coolest Thing to Happen In the Garden State Since Springsteen
Ancient City Found...In Miami?
Lake Superior's Apostle Island Sea Caves Open for the First Time in Years, and They'll Mystify You (PHOTOS)
With No Propane to Heat Her Home, Woman Dies in North Dakota

From Around the Web Promoted Content
Economist: "Obama Won't Finish Term Without Bottom Dropping Out" (Money Morning)
Never transferred your credit card balance? Big mistake. (Next Advisor)
Millennials are Drinking so Much Wine They're Changing How it's Sold (Parade)
You Won't Believe Who's Related to Abraham Lincoln (Ancestry.com)
Forget tattooing your brows and try this... (Dermstore)

ADVERTISEMENT

GET PREPARED NOW: Widespread Power Outages Likely Share See Friends At Risk



News

# 5 Shocking Facts About California's Drought

By Chris Dolce | Published: Jan 9, 2014, 2:23 PM EST | weather.com

### #3: 48 Inches of Rain Needed to Equal "Average"

Average monthly rainfall in San Francisco.

In the higher elevations just south of the Bay Area, **Ben Lomond** typically receives an average of about 50 inches of precipitation during the water year which runs from July 1 to June 30.

As of Jan. 9, the National Weather Service in Monterey, Calif. says that only 2.39 inches of precipitation has been measured so far this water year in this location. This means Ben Lomond needs a little more than 48 inches of rain between now and June 30 just to reach average this water year. That's an average of 0.43 inches of rain each day through the end of April.

In the lower elevations, it's a similar story.

San Francisco has only received 1.50 inches of rain so far this water year, which is about 17 percent of average through Jan. 9. This means the city needs 19.23 inches of rain between now and June 30 just to reach average. Average rainfall during the period from January through June is well below this at 13.06 inches.

**NEXT> Dry Reservoirs**

1 ... 2 3 4 ... 5

ONE KINGS LANE
Find what you Love
UP TO 70% OFF
HOME DECOR—AND MORE
SHOP NOW
ADVERTISEMENT

## Most Popular

Today This Week

Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Breathtaking Photos of the Coldest City in the World
Funny Faces of the Sochi Olympics (PHOTOS)
Ruins of the Rust Belt: Haunting Photos of Abandoned Buildings by Seph Lawless
Fashion on Ice: Outrageous Figure Skating Outfits (PHOTOS)
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Highlights from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games (PHOTOS)
Awesome Black and White Photos of the Early Days of Winter Olympics
This Bangladeshi Boy Is a Better Human Being Than Most of Us
PHOTOS: 2014 Winter Olympics Spills and Wipeouts

## More from Weather.com

Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Lake Superior's Apostle Island Sea Caves Open for the First Time in Years, and They'll Mystify You (PHOTOS)
Winter Storm Pax Snow, Ice: What to Expect and When in Atlanta, Charlotte, Columbia, Raleigh, Birmingham
This Boy Is a Better Human Being Than

## From Around the Web

Promoted Content

Millennials are Drinking so Much Wine They're Changing How it's Sold *(Parade)*
Credit Cards With a 0% APR For 18 Months? Yep. *(Next Advisor)*
This 1 Exercise Accelerates Aging In Your Body (Avoid) *(Old School New Body)*
Forget tattooing your brows and try this... *(Dermstore)*

ADVERTISEMENT

GET PREPARED NOW: Widespread Power Outages Likely Share See Friends At Risk



News

# 5 Shocking Facts About California's Drought

By Chris Dolce | Published: Jan 9, 2014, 2:23 PM EST | weather.com

## #4: Reservoirs Less Than 40 Percent Capacity

Overlay

Autoplay ON OFF

The California Department of Water Resources has listed several reservoirs that are less than 40 percent of capacity as of Jan. 9, 2014. This includes **California's two largest reservoirs**, Shasta Lake and Lake Oroville.

- **Folsom Lake:** 18 percent of its 977,000 acre-foot capacity (36 percent of historical average for this date). The lake is so low that the **remains of a former Gold Rush-era mining town have been exposed**.
- **Lake Orovillle:** 36 percent of its 3.5 million acre-foot capacity (57 percent of historical average for this date).
- **Shasta Lake:** 36 percent of its 4.5 million acre-foot capacity (56 percent of historical average for this date).
- **San Luis Reservoir:** 30 percent of its 2 million acre-foot capacity.

**The Department of Water Resources says** that at this time it estimates it will only be able to deliver five percent of the water requested by 29 public agencies for 2014. This water provides for more than 25 million Californians and almost a million acres of irrigated farmland. The initial allocation estimate ties 2010 as the lowest on record, however it's hoped that this figure will be increased if wetter conditions develop as the winter continues.

**NEXT> Dry Weather Pattern Explained**

1 ... 3 4 5

xfinity
SWITCH TO THE XFINITY® TRIPLE PLAY
GET A GREAT OFFER
RELIABLE SERVICE RAIN OR SHINE
GET IT NOW
ADVERTISEMENT

## Most Popular

Today This Week

Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Breathtaking Photos of the Coldest City in the World
Funny Faces of the Sochi Olympics (PHOTOS)
Ruins of the Rust Belt: Haunting Photos of Abandoned Buildings by Seph Lawless
Fashion on Ice: Outrageous Figure Skating Outfits (PHOTOS)
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Highlights from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games (PHOTOS)
Awesome Black and White Photos of the Early Days of Winter Olympics
This Bangladeshi Boy Is a Better Human Being Than Most of Us
PHOTOS: 2014 Winter Olympics Spills and Wipeouts

AdChoices
ADVERTISEMENT

## More from Weather.com

Great Lakes Ice Cover Is the Largest We've Seen This Century
This Boy Is a Better Human Being Than Most of Us

## From Around the Web

Promoted Content

Forget tattooing your brows and try this... *(Dermstore)*
Obamacare Now Largest Tax Increase In American History *(Money Morning)*

GET PREPARED NOW: Widespread Power Outages Likely Share See Friends At Risk

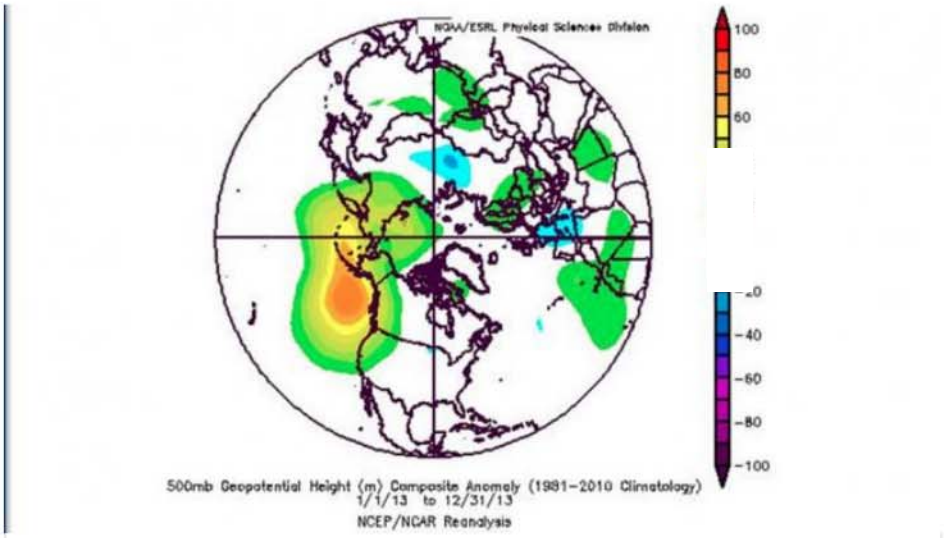


News

# 5 Shocking Facts About California's Drought

By Chris Dolce | Published: Jan 9, 2014, 2:23 PM EST | weather.com

### #5: Dominating High Pressure Blocks Storm Track




Green, yellow and orange shadings from the eastern Pacific Ocean to Alaska represent the dominant blocking ridge of high pressure which kept most Pacific storm system from affecting California in 2013.

**The National Weather Service in Monterey, Calif.** posted the image above explaining why 2013 was **California's driest year on record.**

In a nutshell, the green, yellow and orange shadings from the eastern Pacific Ocean to Alaska represent where high pressure was dominant much of last year. This kept the number of Pacific storm systems affecting the Golden State at a minimum.

The pattern has changed very little in the early days of 2014.

Outside of a frontal system clipping northern California with some overall light amounts of rain and mountain snow on Saturday, Jan. 11, this dry weather pattern will persist through late next week.

This cuts out approximately two-thirds of January from having the potential to see significant precipitation. Given this is typically one of the wettest months of the year in the state, it removes many days from the calendar when the potential for precipitation on average is typically much higher compared to spring.

**MORE ON WEATHER.COM: Rim Fire in California (August 2013)**

Most Popular
Today This Week
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Breathtaking Photos of the Coldest City in the World
Funny Faces of the Sochi Olympics (PHOTOS)
Ruins of the Rust Belt: Haunting Photos of Abandoned Buildings by Seph Lawless
Fashion on Ice: Outrageous Figure Skating Outfits (PHOTOS)
Winter Storm Pax Forecast: Major Ice Storm, Heavy Snow in South
Highlights from the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games (PHOTOS)
Awesome Black and White Photos of the Early Days of Winter Olympics
This Bangladeshi Boy Is a Better Human Being Than Most of Us
PHOTOS: 2014 Winter Olympics Spills and Wipeouts

ADVERTISEMENT

**Advertisement**

National Geographic Daily News

# Huge Rim Fire Gives Opportunity to Restore Forest Differently

Scientists in California hope to improve the management tools of salvage logging, replanting, and controlled burns through research.

Trees burned by the Rim Fire stand on August 25, 2013, in Yosemite National Park.

*PHOTOGRAPH BY JUSTIN SULLIVAN, GETTY IMAGES*

**By Brian Clark Howard**
National Geographic

**PUBLISHED JANUARY 20, 2014**

## After fiery devastation comes rebirth, but in the case of last summer's massive Rim Fire in California, just how that regrowth is best accomplished remains a hot topic.

Started by a hunter's illegal fire that got out of control, the Rim Fire burned about 400 square miles (1,000 square kilometers) of forest in the Sierra Nevadas, from August 17 to October 24, 2013. Exacerbated by a heatwave and drought, the fire

caused an estimated $54 million in damage and destroyed 11 homes, three commercial buildings, and 98 outbuildings, despite the efforts of 5,000 firefighters.

The blaze engulfed the backwoods of Yosemite National Park (threatening ancient sequoias) and large swaths of Stanislaus National Forest, as well as private land in Tuolumne and Mariposa counties. The fire was named for its proximity to the Rim of the World vista point in the national forest.

In September, U.S. Forest Service fire ecologist Jay Miller told the media that 60 square miles (155 square kilometers) of the fire's path were completely charred, leaving nothing left alive. "In other words, it's nuked," said Miller. "If you asked most of the fire ecologists working in the Sierra Nevada, they would call this unprecedented."

Other parts of the fire-affected area show varying degrees of damage, from extensive loss of vegetation to scarred, but surviving, trees.

Despite the devastation, the Rim Fire's aftermath offers a "real opportunity to take a different approach" to restoration of a burned landscape, said Jim Branham, executive officer of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, a state agency. To that end, the Conservancy recently earmarked $1 million toward Rim Fire restoration.

That's a fraction of the tens of millions that are likely to be spent to restore the charred forest over the coming years, a burden that will be shared by the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the state.

For Branham the question is, "How do we do this differently so we don't come back 25 years from now and have to do it all over again?" Fires had affected the same area in the 1980s, after which forest managers planted new tree plantations as part of a regrowth plan. But those trees were largely consumed by the Rim Fire and may even have contributed to its ferocity.

This time around, Branham is working with a diverse group of stakeholders—including government agencies, scientists, conservation groups, and local citizens—to come up with an innovative restoration plan. For some areas of burned forest, the best option may be simply to let nature take its course.

**Replant—or Not?**

Ryan Burnett, a bird biologist with the California-based conservation group Point

Blue, has been studying forest science in the Sierra Nevada for the past 14 years.

He noted that fires tend to be good for some species and bad for others.

The black-backed woodpecker, for example, a species that is being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act, is a "postfire specialist that benefits from really hot fire," Burnett said. His research has shown that the woodpecker population increases dramatically after fire kills large numbers of trees.

"When trees die, wood-boring beetles come in and lay their eggs in them." Burnett explained. "Their young eat the wood and become these big, delicious grubs, and woodpeckers go crazy eating them."

To prosper, the woodpeckers need a very high density of snags, or standing dead trees, preferably on the order of 200 to 300 snags per acre, said Burnett. "Forest Service guidelines are only four to five snags per acre, so we've told them they need to set places aside for this species, and leave some burned areas totally untouched."

Burnett added, "We know trees will grow in those burned areas eventually, but it will be valuable habitat for [the woodpeckers] for 10 to 20 years."

Leaving heavily burned areas to revert back to forest on their own runs counter to traditional management after a blaze, said Burnett. "The public looks at dead trees and thinks managers aren't being good stewards of the land." But his research shows that "places where people did not plant lots of trees right away have higher bird diversity."

Given the way restoration is usually handled, some areas damaged by the Rim Fire are likely to be replanted in the near future, Burnett said. He hopes the science he is working on will help inform which tree species are selected for which areas to provide the richest forest habitat. For example, the fire may offer an opportunity to restore aspens to some areas, since the species depends on fire to open up the forest.

**Salvage Logging "Very Controversial"**

The Forest Service is also likely to contract out some amount of "salvage logging" of trees burned by the blaze. That must be done within about two and a half years or the dead trees will rot.

Salvage logging is "very controversial," Burnett said. Opponents of the practice, including many environmentalists, say the benefits to forest health and reducing future fires have not been proved, and claim that the practice is primarily a financial boon to loggers, allowing them to get at trees in protected areas. Done poorly, salvage logging can damage live trees, can hurt the forest's ability to naturally regenerate, and may actually increase fire risk if dead kindling is left on the ground, critics say.

Branham, of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, agrees that salvage logging is "always controversial," but he's hopeful that "we can have a discussion about doing salvage and leaving part of the landscape in a condition that supports species." That's because the size of the Rim Fire left a "mosaic" landscape, with a range of damage, that "gives a lot of opportunity," he said.

**Fighting Fire With Fire**

The Rim Fire burned so hot because "for the last 75 years, we suppressed fire pretty well," Burnett said. As a result, a large amount of dead wood built up, so when the forest caught fire in August, it turned into an inferno, spurred by the dry, hot weather.

To try to decrease some of that fuel load, the Forest Service has had a policy of doing "mechanical thinning," or selective logging, particularly around houses and other buildings. "We have to remove some fuel to reduce temperatures of fires, but there's no way you can thin ten million acres," Burnett said, referring to the size of forest in the region. Even it that were possible, thinning isn't a silver bullet. "If fire comes in and it's hot, it's going to burn everything—it doesn't matter if you thin it."

An important management tool is allowing some controlled fires to burn, said Burnett, especially fires sparked by lightning in the spring, when the forest is relatively wet. That way dead wood is naturally pruned. Plus, that opens up more habitat for species of concern, he noted.

Branham said consensus has been building among various agencies around more natural fire management. The National Park Service has recently begun experimenting with this approach on its lands, allowing some lightning fires to burn in parts of Yosemite. Such fires are not without risk, however. The Cerro Grande fire in 2000 in Los Alamos, New Mexico, started as a controlled burn, then raged out of control, destroying the homes of 400 families and costing $1 billion.

"But we can't stop fires," said Burnett. "We can have more fire on our terms or

kick the can down the road and have more catastrophic fires. You have to allow fires to burn and recognize the value of fire on the landscape."

He added that large tracts of public lands may offer the best laboratories to try more natural fire management. The Rim Fire burned only a handful of buildings, in part because so few people live in the national forest, he noted.

Branham said the Rim Fire provides a large landscape and a lot of opportunity to try something different and learn from the past. "Hopefully, we can come up with a model going forward," he said. "In some areas we'll say, 'let fire do its thing,' and in other areas it may need to be suppressed."

Branham said those interested in Rim Fire restoration are looking forward to the U.S. Forest Service's draft environmental impact statement, which is expected in early February and will likely set out federal plans for the largest area impacted by the fire.

*Follow Brian Clark Howard on Twitter and Google+.*

## 3 comments

Sign in

5 people listening

Share

Post comment as...

**Newest** | Oldest | Top Comments

**Iphigenia Pavlovic** Jan 21, 2014

Its good if the fire really gives an opportunity for the forest for rebirth. However, It really takes time to do it. I think, we have to protect our nature all the time.

Like Reply

**Sally Richman** Jan 20, 2014

#1 Roach Killer for 2014
mycleaningproducts.com/RoachBully
Roach Bully™ Guaranteed to Kill. Stop The Infestation. Buy it Today!



# Tahoe National Forest Receives Grant From Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Over 165 Acres Treated

Published on Jan 29, 2014 - 1:52:46 PM

Printer friendly page

Tweet

Like Share Be the first of your friends to like this.

repost

By: Tahoe National Forest

Forest Botanist Kathy VanZuuk attacking some Scotch Broom

January 29, 2014 - In 2013, the Tahoe National Forest received a grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to treat nonnative invasive plants (NNIPs). Using this money, Forest Service crews were able to treat over 165 acres of National Forest System lands (NFS) to remove Scotch broom, French broom, yellow star-thistle and spotted knapweed.

The goal of the grant is to manually treat NNIP occurrences to keep them from expanding within forest areas and/or into adjacent forest and reducing the health of the forest. Forest health is promoted through site specific reduction of highly flammable ladder and surface fuels, promoting biodiversity through improving rare plant/fungi habitat and NNIP removal.

Treatment will continue in 2014.

**Help us bring you more news. Be a real reader:** Subscribe

Share Share 0

By submitting a comment you consent to our rules. **You must use your real first and last name, not a nickname or alias.** A comment here is just like a letter to the editor or a post on Facebook. Thank you.

**0 comments** livefyre

**Sign in or Post as Guest** **2 people listening**

+ Follow Share Post comment as...

**Newest** | Oldest | Top Comments

**Subscribe to YubaNetNews, our weekly newsletter featuring the latest regional stories and more.**

Subscribe

zulily New Balance
SHOP NOW
UP TO 50% OFF | ENDS 2/14

**Latest Headlines**

**Regional**

Happening Now - Still The Drought Edition

Local Farmer, Educator, Rowen White elected to Seed Savers Exchange Board of Directors

'Friendship Set to Music' at Valentine's Dance in North San Juan

Rick Haffey to discuss issues facing county government on Wednesday

Get Geared Up For the Great Backyard Bird Count!

Sierra Nevada Children's Services marks 35 years of helping families

RSVP Volunteer Opportunities for February

2-1-1 Day on February 11 Celebrates Human Service Number

Fifth annual Jim Rogers Memorial Ride this Sunday

Dry today, more precip this weekend

More

bed-bugs .net
KILLS BED BUGS FAST.
100% EFFECTIVE
BUY NOW



YubaNet.com © 1999-2014
Nevada City, California (530) 478-9600

transportation incentive for moving biomass from the forest to these facilities. SNC is meeting with Cal Fire management to explore a partnership to assist in developing a multiple year program for bioenergy.

SNC Staff is also focused on specific tasks to support both the Action Pan and SB1122 implementation. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is responsible for implementing SB1122 and is conducting a formal public process to receive input from various stakeholders on specific implementation issues. SNC staff has submitted written comments as well as attended workshops and meetings to provide verbal comments on these issues. SB1122 requires that Cal Fire assist CPUC to determine the megawatt allocations based on the amount of forest byproduct derived from sustainable forest management practices. SNC Staff assisted Cal Fire in conducting three workshops and revising numerous drafts of a white paper defining byproduct of sustainable forest management and outlining a verification process. This white paper has been submitted to the CPUC and is part of the formal SB1122 implementation proceeding currently undergoing public comment.

SNC Staff is also coordinating with up to 12 communities interested in a forest bioenergy facility in their area. Staff has been providing support by identifying funding sources and assisting with funding applications, helping to coordinate outreach efforts to build support for projects, providing technical assistance and funding. There are two communities that are well into the project planning process for SB1122 qualifying projects. These include a 1 MW project in Calaveras County (Wilseyville), which is completing the facility design and engineering. Also, a 1 MW facility in Madera County (North Fork), which has completed the facility design and engineering, adopted the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and secured conditional use permits. In July the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) appealed the environmental report supporting the North Fork project implementation. SNC Staff lead a mediation process between Madera County, the project proponent, and CBD. This led to additional conditions of approval being included in the environmental document however, despite this effort; CBD did not withdraw the appeal. In January, the Madera County Board of Supervisors denied CBD's appeal and permitted the project, however the Board directed planning staff to work with CBD to modify the new conditions to better address CBD's concerns. SNC Staff remains engage in discussions with all parties to revise the conditions to address all parties concerns, thereby allowing the project to move to the financing stage.

The Action Plan directs SNC to develop community scaled facility criteria to support appropriate sizing and location of facilities. SNC is coordinating with UC Berkeley, Cal Fire and US Forest Service to develop location criteria and a tool to pre-assess the validity of specific locations to support a successful project. This tool will also be used to proactively identify suitable sites for bioenergy facilities.

TSS Consulting was retained to provide technical assistance and some policy support to SNC and project partners. SNC remains involved in the Biomass Working Group,

which includes representatives from federal and state agencies, forest and energy industries, conservation and community development groups and technical experts. The SNC is an active member of the working group and has provided coordination assistance and additional resources for the activities it undertakes. In addition, SNC participates in the State Bioenergy Working Group, lead by the Natural Resources Agency and Cal EPA. The purpose of this group is to coordinate several key State agencies to implement the Bioenergy Action Plan. This group meets every couple of months in the Governor's Office.

**Next Steps**

Focus areas for the SNC's Forest Bioenergy Team's activities, working with Cal Fire, US Forest Service and other partners, over the next year will include:

- Continuing to provide project support to the North Fork and Wilseyville projects and evaluate and prioritize other projects to lend support to;
- Continuing to work with Cal Fire and other partners to develop a multi-year program supported with Cap and Trade revenues;
- Identifying new funding opportunities and providing grant writing assistance for appropriate funding opportunities;
- Evaluating projects that have completed pre-assessment work as potential candidates for SNC's Healthy Forest Grant Program;
- Completing developing the optimal location criteria and tool to identify the most appropriate sites for forest bioenergy;
- Facilitating discussions among concerned parties relating to CEQA concerns and other potential project barriers to reach resolution; and,
- Providing targeted education and coordinating tours for representatives of key agencies, such as the CPUC, the Energy Commission, and the Air Resources Board.

**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.**

which are integrally connected to the web site. Since the mobile phone applications were originally procured by the SNC, it is now appropriate and necessary for the SNC to grant ownership of the mobile applications to SBC.

SNC Staff have confirmed with Department of General Services, Technology Acquisitions Branch and the State Attorney General's Office that the proposed grant of the mobile phone applications is legal and within the authority of the SNC Board. The proposed grant of mobile phone applications is not considered a project under California Environmental Quality Act guidelines and does not require any environmental review documentation.

**Next Steps**

If approved by the Board, staff will prepare and execute a grant agreement with SBC outlining the terms of the grant and ensuring that the mobile phone applications continue to be available for free download to the public and any sponsorship or advertising revenue generated from the apps be used solely to support the SNGT Project.

**Recommendation**

**Staff recommends that the Board authorize a grant to the Sierra Business Council of full ownership of two mobile phone applications for the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project and direct staff to develop and execute a grant agreement to facilitate the transfer.**