

### **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.**