

Keeping the Sierra Green

*For the Benefit
of All
Californians*



2013-14 Annual Report



Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor
State of California

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California Natural Resources Agency

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A WORD FROM BJ KIRWAN, BOARD CHAIR

As one of the SNC's inaugural Governing Boardmembers, it is difficult to imagine that we are entering our 10th year of existence. This report recognizes yet another year of our contributions to the Sierra Nevada Region.



Our Board holds quarterly meetings throughout the communities that make up the Sierra Nevada. This provides us an opportunity to learn firsthand about the projects we have funded and the challenges and opportunities that exist in the Region. I am consistently impressed with the passion and commitment of the many partners we rely upon to carry out our mission “on the ground.”

In the past year, we continued our Proposition 84 Grant Program with a focus on addressing healthy forests and legacy mining contaminants. We also dedicated \$1 million of our remaining grant funds to restoration efforts on the Rim Fire, the largest fire in the recorded history of the Sierra Nevada. This report provides information about the accomplishments of the projects that have been completed since our grant program was initiated in 2007. As we commit the remainder of our Proposition 84 funding in the coming year, I am proud of the portfolio of projects that we have supported and I believe these project are clearly in line with the vision of the SNC when we were created almost 10 years ago.

And of course we continue to engage in a variety of other efforts in the Region. We coordinated the Fifth Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup, removing another 39 tons of trash from our waterways. The Sierra Nevada Geotourism Project continues to improve, providing visitors from around the world with unique, authentic tourism opportunities in our Region. Our staff facilitates and assists a number of collaborative efforts around the Sierra Nevada, including efforts to improve forest health and community well-being in a complementary fashion.

As we move into the second decade of the SNC's existence, I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the continued outstanding work of our staff, who truly make the SNC what we are. Likewise, a word of appreciation to my fellow Boardmembers, who provide the guidance and direction for the programs and activities that we undertake to carry out our mission.

I hope you enjoy this report and take the time to explore some of the links to better understand who we are and what we do. Here's to another 10 years of making a difference!



SNC Governing Board and staff, Sequoia National Park



Rim Fire , Photo courtesy of Cal FIRE

A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

On August 17, 2013, it happened. The event that many of us had feared, and yet seemed unavoidable, occurred. The Rim Fire scorched 257,000 acres making it the largest fire in the recorded history of the Sierra Nevada. It added a new term to our lexicon, “megafire.” Not only did it cover a vast area eight times the size of San Francisco, it burned at an extremely high intensity, leaving nearly 100,000 acres virtually without living vegetation.

The issues of forest health and reducing the risk of large damaging fire are ones that we have been working on for a number of years. The SNC has been a part of building a coalition of diverse interests who understand the need to increase the pace and scale of the ecological restoration of our forests. This includes environmental and conservation groups, the wood products industry, federal and local government, recreationists, water agencies and community organizations. We’ve assisted numerous communities with local collaborative efforts to address these issues in their communities. To be sure, some progress has been made and a solid foundation of cooperation has been created. But the plain simple truth is we are making nowhere near the progress we need in our restoration efforts. All indications are that the future holds more of these megafires in store. These events threaten our communities, degrade our water quality, deposit large amounts of sediment in our streams and reservoirs, foul our air with pollutants, emit large amounts of greenhouse gases, destroy crucial habitat, and eliminate recreational opportunities.

In the face of this reality, the SNC has launched a more aggressive effort to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration, with a focus on forests managed by the federal government. This effort will likely include Region-wide and watershed-level action plans that identify the true scope of the restoration needed, the additional investment needed, the major impediments to restoration, and specific actions that should be taken. We remain committed to doing this in a collaborative, ecologically sound manner. But we are likewise committed to rejecting the status quo and acting with a sense of urgency that matches the situation we face.

While the SNC will continue to address the many issues that affect our Region, our Governing Board has made it clear that addressing the issue of forest health is our top priority. The stakes are simply too high to fail.



GREAT SIERRA RIVER CLEANUP

SNC again supported stewardship in the Region by sponsoring the **Fifth Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup** (GSRC). GSRC is an annual opportunity for residents of Sierra communities to participate in restoring the health of their local waterways.

On September 21, 2013, more than 4,200 volunteers joined together to remove nearly 39 tons of trash and recyclables from 441 miles of rivers throughout the Sierra Nevada.



INVESTING IN THE SIERRA

The SNC's vision for the future is that the magnificent Sierra Nevada Region enjoys outstanding environmental, economic and social health with vibrant communities and landscapes sustained for future generations. To achieve this vision, the SNC is educating the many beneficiaries of Sierra resources – virtually all Californians – about the need for investment.

EDUCATION: In the last year, the SNC conducted four tours and over 50 meetings with the goal of educating legislators, their staff, key partners and other decision-makers about the issues facing the Sierra, the value of the Region to the state, and the benefits of investing in watershed health.

MOKELUMNE AVOIDED COST ANALYSIS: The SNC and key partners completed and released the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis (Moke Report) which analyzed how active forest management modifies wildfire and post-fire erosion behavior over a 30-year time period and made the economic case for significantly increasing investment in fuel treatments in western forests.

Researchers quantified the financial costs and benefits of forest management activities. Results showed that fuel treatments can substantially reduce the acreage of fire (and particularly high-intensity wildfire), and that the economic benefits of fuel treatments can outweigh the costs by a ratio of approximately 2 to 1 – a conservative estimate given that the fires modeled were far smaller and less intense than fires like the Rim Fire.

BIOMASS UTILIZATION: Another opportunity for Regional investment is the need for increased infrastructure to utilize the biomass removed as a part of forest restoration. Opportunities include both value-added wood processing (ranging from mulches and animal bedding to small sawmills), and biomass-to-energy (ranging from firewood to large bioenergy facilities.) The development of local economic opportunities to utilize the woody biomass helps achieve the triple bottom line by increasing resources for forest restoration, creating local jobs, and supporting community sustainability.



Over the past year, the SNC awarded \$418,590 in grants funds to help develop biomass industries in two communities. An additional \$500,000 in project development funding was leveraged through fund development assistance to nine other communities. The SNC was also instrumental in obtaining a grant from the US Forest Service, which will provide \$250,000 in small grants and technical assistance to projects throughout the state. The SNC's efforts support communities seeking to develop new projects and those working to restart existing bioenergy infrastructure.

Merced, CA - 0.5 MW Biomass Facility

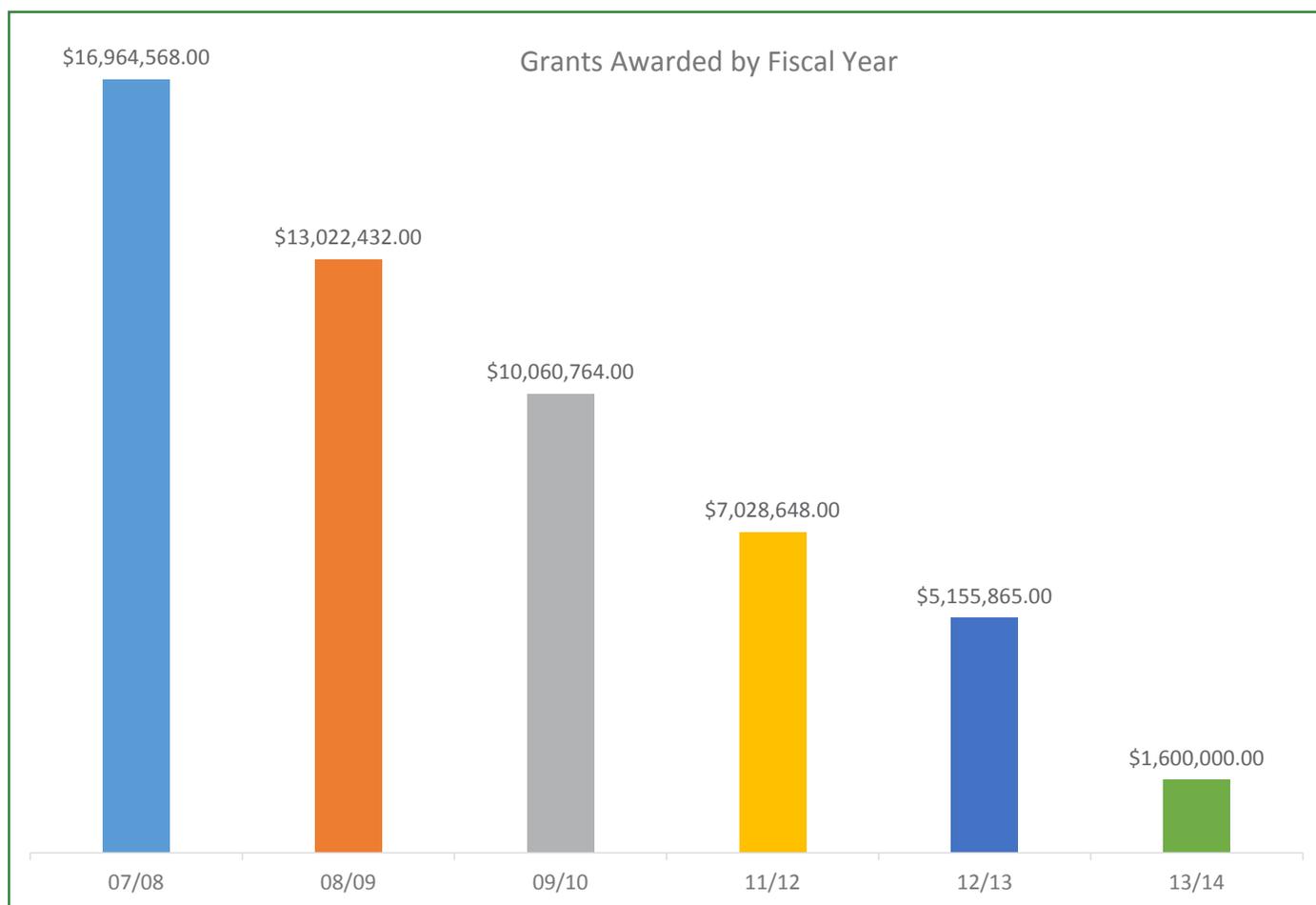
2013-14 PROPOSITION 84 GRANT PROGRAM

The SNC had approximately \$2.9 million dollars in remaining Proposition 84 dollars available in June 2013 for projects dealing with the preservation or restoration of forest health and remediating the toxins associated with legacy mining. Throughout FY 2013-14, the SNC Governing Board authorized one abandoned mine project and six forest health projects for a total of \$1.6 million in new grant awards.

In addition to new grant awards, grantees completed 24 projects in FY 2013-14, leaving 97 active Proposition 84 projects.

SNC's PROPOSITION 84 INVESTMENT

From the beginning of the SNC Proposition 84 grant program in 2007 through the end of FY 2013-14, the SNC has awarded 300 projects totalling \$53,832,277. In this same time frame, the SNC closed out 203 projects with grantees spending more than \$32 million dollars in the Sierra Nevada.



“The Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant program has had a really positive impact throughout the Sierra Nevada, and, I’m happy to say, in my home county of Alpine, as well.”

John Brissenden, SNC Boardmember

MAKING A DIFFERENCE . . .



Cold Stream, Sierra County

LAND CONSERVED

**27,098 ACRES PURCHASED
IN FEE TITLE**

**23,057 ACRES PURCHASED
IN CONSERVATION
EASEMENTS**

**41,943 OF THE TOTAL ACRES
CONSERVED ARE WORKING
LANDSCAPES**

“Grants awarded through SNC have directly facilitated the conservation of 2500 acres and 85 miles of trail, which provides access to some of the region’s most scenic public lands. In addition, grants have allowed for the planning for the conservation of an additional 800 acres.”

***Louise Jensen,
Lassen Land & Trails Trust***



Rudnick Ranch, Kern County Photo courtesy of E.J. Remson/TNC

... 10 YEARS OF SNC GRANTS

LAND RESTORED

**7,752 ACRES
FOREST, MEADOW, AND
RANGELAND IMPROVED**

**30 MILES OF STREAM
BANK RESTORED**



BEFORE



AFTER



Top: Day Lassen Bench, Lassen/Modoc/Shasta Counties

Bottom: Merrill Davies, Sierra County



Rose Creek, Modoc County

“In particular, support from SNC has been key to our organization’s ability to grow our meadow restoration efforts, from a few scattered projects to a fully realized Sierra-wide initiative.”

***Luke Hunt,
American Rivers***



Alpha Mine Site, Nevada County

ABANDONED MINE LANDS

An on-going area of SNC attention and restoration focus in FY 2013-14 was the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) initiative. In addition to providing grant funds to five projects for remediation planning and implementation, the SNC participated in several inter-agency efforts to address AML issues. These included initiating discussions to improve the due diligence process for AML properties acquired with public funds. The SNC also sponsored informational summits, helped in the development of a Special Hearing by the Assembly Natural Resources Committee on the impact of mercury on human health, and partnered with the Sierra Fund to conduct a legislative tour on AML issues.

PROTECTING AND RESTORING THE SIERRA

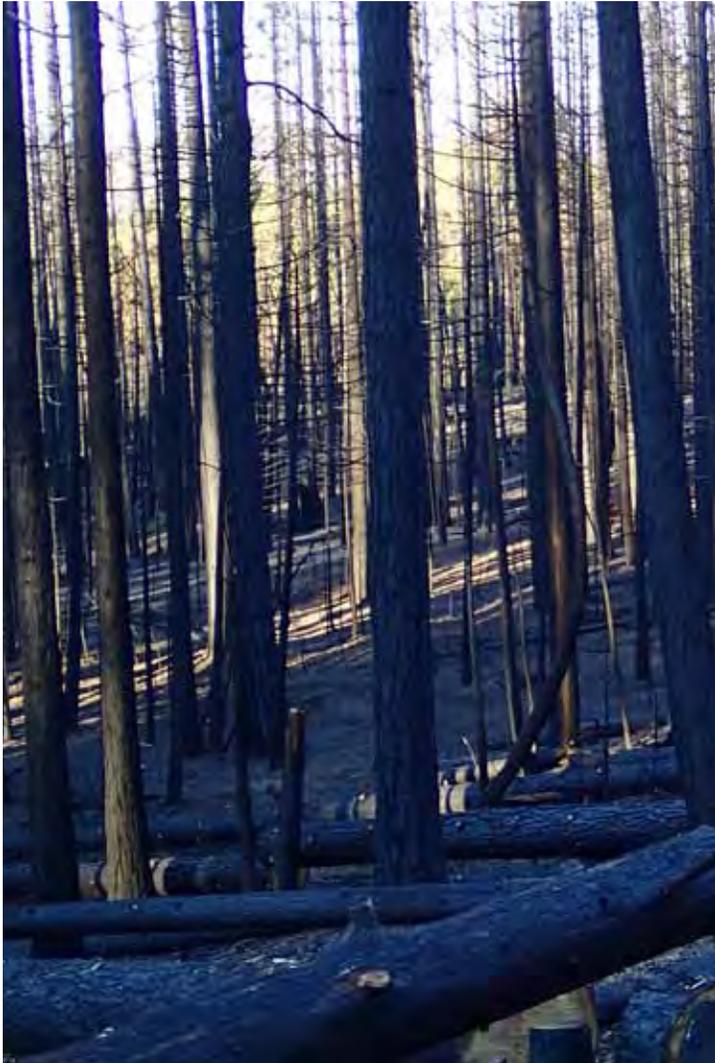
The Sierra Nevada has tremendous environmental, cultural and historic values and the SNC worked with many partners in 2013-14 to protect and enhance those values. In addition to our grant program, we undertook a number of activities that address forest health and wildfire risk and recovery.

Through efforts initiated by the SNC, local and regional collaborations throughout the Sierra are sharing information, resolving differences, leveraging resources, and taking action to restore forests to ecological health and improve local communities' social and economic well-being. The results have been widely recognized for their innovation and effectiveness. For example, The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) continued to demonstrate the benefits of a collaborative approach, as the Stanislaus National Forest began the work of recovering from the worst fire in Sierra Nevada history – the Rim Fire.

THE SIERRA-DELTA CONNECTION: In March 2014, SNC and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy held a Joint Board meeting to discuss the benefits of working across boundaries to address water and climate issues. Discussions included climate change, its impacts on the Sierra and the Delta, and how ecosystem services link the two regions. The commitment by the two conservancies to continue working together has been memorialized in the collaborative resolution: “Sierra to the Sea”.

SIERRA COLLABORATION: The SNC supported additional local collaboration in communities throughout the Sierra by providing facilitation, funding and technical assistance. As a result, many of these communities were able to make progress on issues ranging from building consensus around specific forest restoration projects to the potential for development of biomass utilization facilities.

RIM FIRE RECOVERY: The SNC helped coordinate a series of workshops to identify the ecological issues associated with the removal of materials from the massive Rim Fire burn area. As a result of the workshops, greater consensus was developed in regards to controversial issues such as salvage harvesting. In addition, the SNC provided \$1 million for restoration projects in the Rim Fire area. Projects are being developed and will be submitted to the SNC for funding consideration by the Yosemite Stanislaus Solution (YSS). The YSS is composed of a broad group of stakeholders with a mission “to restore and maintain healthy forests and watersheds, fire-safe communities and sustainable local economies using a science-based approach.”



The Rim Fire burned nearly 100,000 acres at high intensity



Participants at a Rim Fire Restoration meeting co-facilitated by the SNC and the USFS

“Prior to the establishment of the SNC, decisions for the Sierra were being made without the Sierra having a seat at the table.”

***John Laird, Secretary
CA Natural Resources Agency***



Dicks Pass, Desolation Wilderness Photo Courtesy of Chris Dallas

ENJOYING THE SIERRA

The Sierra Nevada Region offers world-class recreational opportunities for visitors from California and around the world. Opportunities range from activities such as hiking, biking, mountain climbing, and river rafting to tranquil sight-seeing and exploration of the Region's abundant cultural and historic assets. Recreation and tourism are essential components of the Region's economy and play a critical role in educating California residents on the importance of the Region's resources and the need to care for them. Over the past year, SNC has continued to work with local communities to develop and promote tourism assets.

In 2013-14, the SNC continued to support and promote the Sierra Nevada Geotourism Mapguide project in partnership with the Sierra Business Council and National Geographic. The project website, www.sierranevadageotourism.org, showcases almost 2,000 unique tourism destinations in the Region and has been viewed by more than 4.6 million people around the world. The website and destinations are marketed through distribution of printed maps and a multi-media advertising campaign.

An exciting new focus area for SNC is water trails, a great opportunity for viewing nature via kayaks, canoes and paddle boards. The Region has many lakes and rivers on which water trails can be developed. These trails can greatly increase visitation and support local economies.

During the past year SNC conducted an analysis of the most favorable sites for water trail demonstration projects. Staff will provide education, outreach, planning, and fund development assistance for these projects to help launch a regional water trails movement.



Road Bikes, Merced County



Kayaks on Independence Lake Photo courtesy of Simon Williams

“The SNC has given me a way to get reacquainted with the entire Sierra in an intimate and enjoyable way with an outstanding group of people. “

Bob Kirkwood, SNC Boardmember

2013-14 Budgeted and Actual Expenditures

STATE OPERATIONS:

Personal Services	Budgeted	Actual
Salaries and Wages	\$1,981,591	\$1,952,234
Staff Benefits	\$784,267	\$776,253
Personal Services, Totals	\$2,765,858	\$2,728,487

Operating Expenses & Equipment	Budgeted	Actual
General Expense	\$267,167	\$258,591
Travel - In State	\$59,737	\$69,771
Travel - Out of State	\$ -	\$ -
Training	\$25,000	\$20,198
Facilities	\$287,668	\$282,696
Utilities	\$16,800	\$18,816
Information Technology	\$61,691	\$74,018
Contracts - External	\$365,997	\$362,977
Contracts - Interagency Agreement	\$718,738	\$511,796
Other Items of Expense	\$25,196	\$21,733
Pro Rata (Control Agency Costs)	\$192,148	\$192,148
Operating Expenses & Equipment, Totals	\$2,020,142	\$1,812,744
State Operations, Totals	\$4,786,000	\$4,541,231

EXPENDITURES BY FUNDING SOURCE

State Operations	Budgeted	Actual
Environmental License Plate Fund	\$4,248,000	\$4,179,204
Proposition 84	\$538,000	\$362,027
State Operations, Totals	\$4,786,000	\$4,541,231

Local Assistance Grants	Budgeted	Actual
Proposition 84 (see note 1)	\$3,673,000	\$344,977
Local Assistance Grants, Totals	\$3,673,000	\$344,977

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

Expenditures	Budgeted	Actual
State Operations, Totals	\$4,786,000	\$4,541,231
Local Assistance Grants, Totals	\$3,673,000	\$344,977
Expenditures, Totals	\$8,459,000	\$4,886,208

Remaining funds for Proposition 84 local assistance grants will be available for expenditure and encumbrance through June 30, 2015

GOVERNING BOARD

Governor's Appointees:

John Laird Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)
Todd Ferrara Designated Representative, Deputy Secretary for External Affairs, CNRA
Eraina Ortega Designated Representative, Chief Deputy Director, Policy, Department of Finance

Public Members, Governor's Appointees:

BJ Kirwan Public Member
Bob Kirkwood Public Member
Vacant Public member

Legislative Appointees:

John Brissenden Speaker of the Assembly
Bob Johnston Senate Rules Committee

Local Government Appointees:

North Sierra Subregion

Pam Giacomini, Supervisor, Shasta County

North Central Sierra Subregion

Sherrie Thrall, Supervisor, Plumas County

Central Sierra Subregion

Ron Briggs, Supervisor, El Dorado County

East Sierra Subregion

Byng Hunt, Supervisor, Mono County

South Central Sierra Subregion

Louis Boitano, Supervisor, Amador County

South Sierra Subregion

Allen Ishida, Supervisor, Tulare County

Non-Voting Liaison Advisors:

U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Appointments

A. Este Stifel, Bureau of Land Management
Don Nuebacher, National Parks Service

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's Appointment

Barnie Gyant, U.S. Forest Service

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

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