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Sierra Nevada Conservancy Names Executive Officer

Cal/EPA Undersecretary Jim Branham Chosen as Conservancy's First Executive



Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman, right, congratulates Jim Branham in Sacramento

Sacramento – Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman today announced that the historic Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has selected Jim Branham as its first executive officer. He will assume his new duties on Oct. 24. Branham currently serves as Undersecretary for the California Environmental Protection Agency, a position he has held since his appointment by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in November 2003. As Cal/EPA Undersecretary, Branham has worked to shape and implement Gov. Schwarzenegger's environmental policy.

“I can't think of anyone better qualified than Jim Branham to hold this position. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will gain great benefit from the more than 25 years Jim has been working on California's environmental and natural resource policy issues,” said Chrisman, who also serves as Sierra Nevada Conservancy chairman. “Jim is a fantastic person and he will do a spectacular job in helping to coordinate the conservancy's role in protection of the region's environment and economy.”

The SNC was established in January 2005 to allocate funding for environmental preservation while providing support for economic sustainability across 25 million acres from the Oregon border to Kern County. As California's largest conservancy, the SNC will provide grants to local governments for environmental protection, resource conservation, recreational opportunities and economic growth. Its mission is to cooperate with local governments and interested parties to preserve and protect the environment and economies in the Sierra Nevada region. It is comprised of 22 counties, 20 incorporated cities, 40 special districts, and 212 communities.

“I am grateful to Secretary Chrisman and the SNC Board for this tremendous opportunity,” Branham said. “I am also proud to have served Secretaries Terry Tamminen and Alan Lloyd as Governor Schwarzenegger's Cal/EPA Undersecretary for the past two years.”

Cal/EPA Secretary Alan C. Lloyd, Ph.D., said, “Jim has done a tremendous job as undersecretary of Cal/EPA, demonstrating his strong commitment to the Governor’s Environmental Action Plan. He has provided steady leadership and sound counsel, and I will miss having him in the office next door. At the same time, I am pleased that Jim will be able to build a new organization that will share Governor Schwarzenegger’s vision for a sustainable Sierra Nevada. This is a wonderful opportunity for Jim and I wish him the very best.”

Branham began his career as an aide to State Senator Jim Nielsen from December 1978 through January 1991. From April 1991 through 1998, Branham served in a number of positions under former Governor Pete Wilson. These positions included Chief Deputy Director and Deputy Director at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and Undersecretary and Deputy Secretary of the California Resources Agency.

“In many ways, the Resources Agency is welcoming Jim Branham home,” Chrisman said. “Jim spent a good part of his career either at Resources or with its departments and there’s no better place for him to return home to than as the head of our largest conservancy.”

From March 1999 to November of 2003, Branham was the Director of External Relations for the Pacific Lumber Company. In that role he was the primary contact with various state and federal resource agencies dealing with the implementation of the company’s Habitat Conservation Plan and Sustained Yield Plan. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from California State University, Chico.