September 3-4, 2014 Bridgeport Memorial Hall 73 N. School Street Bridgeport, CA 93517



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:01am. Kirwan welcomed everyone and shared her thanks to everyone who participated in the tour and to staff and partners who helped put it together. Boardmember John Brissenden commented on how nice it is to see the landscape on the east side. He indicated that the 1,240-acre Conservation Easement viewed on the field tour was tremendous.

Supervisor Paul Roen, Sierra County Supervisor, (alternate for Supervisor Sherrie Thrall) was issued the Oath of Office by Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul.

II. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, John Laird, Bob Kirkwood, Bob Johnston, John Brissenden,

Pam Giacomini, Paul Roen, Byng Hunt, Louis Boitano, Allen Ishida,

Barnie Gyant, and Este Stifel.

Absent: Ron Briggs and Woody Smeck

III. Approval of June 12, 2014 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Boitano seconded the motion to approve the June 12, 2014 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comments

Sarah Green, Alpine Watershed Group thanked the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) and staff for all the support to Alpine County and the Watershed Group. She specifically wanted to announce the First Annual Alpine Aspen Festival, combining visitor opportunities such as hiking, fishing, photography, with restoration and educational work and monitoring. The event is September 25-28. She also thanked the Board for consideration of the Alpine County Fuels Reduction Project.

V. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Kirwan welcomed California Natural Resources Agency Secretary John Laird. Secretary Laird expressed his pleasure to be at his first SNC Board meeting and he expressed his surprise that it took so long to get here. He stated that the SNC is reaching its tenth anniversary and is everything he had dreamed of when he co-authored the legislation that created it. While there was initial polarization regarding the creation of the SNC, Laird believes that it now has broad support within the Sierra as a result of the value of the work it has done and the way it has carried out its mission. Laird said that there are many issues that need attention, such as drought and wildfire risk. A specific focus for him during the Governor's

second term will be to address the need for sustainable funding for stewardship of public lands.

Kirwan thanked Secretary Laird and said, "with SNC as his 'child', we look up to him and appreciate his comments."

Kirwan shared information about a meeting that took place on August 3-4, at Sorensen's Resort. She said the purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the first ten years of the SNC's existence and begin to consider what to do in the next ten years. Other participants included Boardmember Brissenden, Executive Officer, Jim Branham, Assistant Executive Officer, Joan Keegan, and Regional Policy and Programs Manager, Angela Avery. Staff from Sierra Business Council, Sierra Nevada Alliance, and The Sierra Fund also participated. Kirwan shared some thoughts on where the SNC has been most successful over the last ten years and some of the challenges faced. She said that key questions for the future include what the SNC will do with less bond money, how they maintain their relevance and ensure issues in the Sierra are adequately addressed, how they connect with other agencies and programs to leverage resources, and what can they do to get more recognition from the administration and the legislature? She summarized the meeting as teeing up big picture issues for future, more detailed conversations with the Board and stakeholders.

VI. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer, Jim Branham, stated that the discussion referred to by the Chair had reaffirmed that the SNC's enabling legislation really got it right for the Region. He said the mission and Board make-up in particular have contributed to the SNCs success in the Region. While he noted that there are things we can do better, it was the right approach. He also indicated that initial worries about polarization and conflict have faded and it is hard to identify the local representatives from the statewide representatives on the Board in terms of issues.

Branham also noted that the Strategic Plan is to be updated next year and much of what was discussed will be incorporated into that process.

a. Administrative Update

Amy Lussier, SNC's Administrative Services Division Chief, stated that the SNC successfully spent 99% of the budget last year and that our current year budget is in good shape and on track. She also called the Board's attention to Attachment A of the staff report, an organizational chart that includes pictures of all of the SNC staff. She said it will be kept updated and will be included in the Board packet for every meeting.

Lussier noted that a retired annuitant has been hired to do work resulting from the SNC's Memorandum of Understanding with the Stewardship Council now

that we have executed our first covenant. She said all of his work will be reimbursed by the Council.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Branham shared a few comments about discussions staff have had relative to the future Water Bond. A packet was included in the Board materials with information on the outcomes of those discussions. He noted that at various times in the discussion, the SNC was identified to receive amounts ranging between \$115 million down to zero. Staff continued to work with partners and supporters to address the various bond proposals, from Senator Wolk to Assemblymember Rendon and others. In the end, the amount the SNC received in the Water Bond was \$25 million. There is obviously a level of disappointment with the final outcome, but the SNC is committed to leveraging the \$25 million and working with other agencies to achieve the greatest benefit (if the measure passes). Staff will provide the Board a more detailed discussion in December. It is unclear at this time as to when funds will be available.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked if the Bond has considerable funds that are relevant to the Sierra but don't come directly to the SNC, but instead go to Department of Water Resources (DWR), Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and CAL FIRE. She also asked what the prospects are for any kind of collaboration to ensure those funds will be used for multipurpose projects. What signals have we had from other agencies?

Branham responded that there are funds in the Water Bond for those agencies and others. He stated that the SNC is being careful about getting too far ahead of ourselves with the General Election still being a couple months away, but he assured the Board that staff will engage with those others agencies and potential grantees.

Secretary Laird concurred with Branham's comments. One of the challenges is that both Cap and Trade and Water bond are moving away from traditional earmarks, and towards setting goals. The bigger challenge for the SNC and others is to figure out where there might be eligibility and link it to pots of specific funds. The Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP), for example, has opportunities for a variety of projects. There might be a role for the SNC to help develop capacity to assist potential partners/applicants apply for other pots of money.

Boardmember Giacomini responded to Secretary Laird, saying the SNC is already set-up to manage funds, while DFW is having to create an entirely new system.

Secretary Laird responded that DFW has done massive amounts of restoration in recent years. Laird also noted he is working with CAL FIRE on being open to partnerships and interagency cooperation.

Branham stated one of the things he concluded as the process played out, SNC doesn't have a champion in the Legislature. He expressed disappointment that while he felt the Region's legislative representatives would be helpful, in the end it didn't materialize. He noted that finding a champion from outside the Region is of great importance, and we will continue to struggle without one.

Branham acknowledged the support on the Water Bond from The Trust for Public Lands, The Nature Conservancy, Mountain Counties Water Resources Association, and in particular, the Sierra Business Council (SBC). In terms of cap and trade, the SNC went through another exercise to secure funding for 2015-16, but have been informed by the Natural Resources Agency that there will be no changes from the current year funding.

Secretary Laird added that he personally advocated successfully for some funding from Cap and Trade revenue go for agricultural lands preservation. Given the lack of funding for the Williamson Act, this provides another opportunity for agricultural land conservation.

Angela Avery gave an update on the SNC's recent outreach and communications activities. She indicated that the SNC has focused a great deal of its communication on issues related to water and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission reduction. The current focus is on development of an outreach plan for the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan.

Avery noted that this month marks the tenth anniversary of the SNC's creation. Last week, in an attempt to publicize this, local representative Boardmembers were asked to issue op-eds for their local media. Boardmember Hunt has already published an op-ed in the Sierra Wave. The SNC kicked off a social media campaign using Facebook and Twitter to help publicize successes over our first ten years. Avery also reported that the Great Sierra River Cleanup (GSRC) hit a milestone of securing 16 legislative co-chairs. Staff is using the Sierra Wildfire Wire Blog to communicate information related to fires and the issues associated with them.

Boardmember Ishida asked if staff have contacted Public Broadcasting Service, as this is a prime opportunity to get television exposure of what's happened in the last ten years. Public radio is also a good outlet for communicating these stories. He stated that the SNC needs to come up with a way to educate the metropolitan areas of our work and the benefits they derive from the Region.

Rural counties did not fare well on the Bond and we need to work on the outreach necessary to correct that.

Boardmember Kirkwood shared that he did hear a National Public Radio (NPR) piece on salvage logging on the Rim Fire, which at least addressed some of the issues.

Avery also shared that the SNC organized a media tour of the Rim Fire in August and Capitol Public Radio was there and are planning to do a news series on wildfire, which will hopefully bring the situation to light.

c. Rim Fire Grants Update

Branham reminded the Board of its authorized \$1 million for Rim Fire restoration efforts and that he was delegated the authority to award certain grants if there is a timeliness issue. The first grant awarded was in partnership with the Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions group and Tuolumne River Trust, which will be the fiscal agent and grant recipient. The grant is for a comprehensive spring assessment within the Rim Fire burn area. In order for the work to be done this summer, the grant was awarded in early August and work is already under way.

d. Miscellaneous Updates

Branham noted that the SNC in cooperation with the US Forest Service (USFS) co-convened workshops around the Rim Fire salvage logging environmental impact statements (EIS). Those workshops were an attempt to engage scientists, environmentalists, and industry around some of the ecological issues. Mandy Vance, SNC's Mt. Whitney Area Representative, did a great job facilitating that process. Branham indicated that the Record of Decision was signed last week by the outgoing forest supervisor, and generally speaking they did a nice job of thoughtful balance in terms of the economic and environmental issues. However, despite broad involvement from local and national environmental groups, it appears as if it is going to be litigated by a couple of organizations. Nonetheless, all this collaborative work helped to deliver a stronger decision and most of the environmental groups involved in the process will likely not join the legal challenge.

Boardmember Gyant stated the USFS did something they've never done, and it was collaborating on salvage work and being honest on the need for salvage. USFS and partners did a lot to protect the black-backed woodpecker and the California spotted owl. The prospect of litigation is disheartening, but the USFS getting the EIS out within a year is an amazing accomplishment. The process here can be an example for us. We ought to pause and think about how we approach burned landscapes. Taking a different approach as an agency is where we are headed.

e. Recreation and Tourism Presentation
Branham reminded Boardmembers of the thematic approach to Board meetings,
with the current meeting having a recreation and tourism theme.

Bob Kingman, the SNC's Mt. Lassen Area Manager, started off by recognizing and appreciating all the recreational opportunities in the Sierra Nevada, and thanked our partners for making themselves available for the tour. Kingman provided the Board with an overview of the importance of tourism and recreation to the Region, including data relative to economic impact. He noted that in addition to the ongoing efforts on the Geotourism project, the SNC is now promoting the development of water trails, introducing Jaryd Block, the SNC AmeriCorps intern to brief the Board on that subject.

Block thanked the Board for the opportunity to present and reported that the SNC and AmeriCorps started out looking at over 35,000 water bodies using high tech computer resources. Parameters including close access to roadways, local communities and towns along the trail, and public access were used to identify 82 water bodies with the greatest potential. From this analysis two sites were identified as the highest potential for water trail development: Lake Almanor in Plumas County and Crystal Basin in El Dorado County.

Boardmember Stifel shared as demographics change, educating the public about where the opportunities to explore the outdoors will be very important.

Boardmember Hunt thanked everyone for a good tour and appreciated everyone participating. He noted that the Eastern Sierra economy is almost entirely based on recreation and tourism and that three of the seven statutory goals at the SNC have to do with recreation and tourism. He also introduced the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative, which will work with local political leadership to address issues relating to recreation and tourism on the eastside. The collaborative has already raised \$20,000. He indicated his desire for the SNC to provide some level of administrative, logistical, and facilitation support. Branham indicated that staff would work with Supervisor Hunt in identifying support that could be provided.

Boardmember Johnston expressed concerns over the research cited by Kingman, noting that that the data might not reflect reality. He noted that tourism economic analysis needs to be about the actual activities and must account for changes in the value of the dollar.

Boardmember Ishida offered that the Film Commission is generating revenue in Tulare County, noting that it is difficult however to get some permits on public land to do filming.

Public Comment

Stacey Corless, Supervisor Elect for Mono County – underscored Boardmember Hunt's request for resources to assist in getting the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative off the ground. The connection between recreation, watershed, forest health, and environmental education in unmatched. Forest Plan revision is a critical piece and time is of the essence.

Jo Bacon, Mayor of Mammoth Lakes shared that they are ready and willing to be involved in the Collaborative, as the Council in 2010 approved the first ever recreation plan for that area. This is an acknowledgement of the key position of recreation in the overall economy.

John Henrie, of Mammoth Lakes Tourism, and Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access Board, Mammoth Lakes Recreation, Visit CA Board, and others strongly supports the Collaborative effort. Henrie stated that transient occupancy taxes are the key to the solvency of local government.

VII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, indicated she has been closely watching legislation proposed to reform California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in various ways. Two bills are on the Governor's desk, AB 543 and AB 52. Several CEQA cases are pending in the Supreme Court involving the use of Categorical Exemptions that could provide guidance for future actions.

VIII. 2013-14 Annual Report (ACTION)

Avery reported it is that time of year again where staff has kicked off efforts to develop the 2013-14 Annual Report. The report will be four to six pages that meet statutory requirements and will focus on Fiscal Year 2013-14 activities and a bit of ten year anniversary perspective. A survey went out to over 2,000 stakeholders with the purpose of collecting feedback on how the SNC is doing in the Region. Boardmembers are encouraged to respond to that survey. The outline of the report is in the packet. Staff is suggesting the Board approve the proposed approach for completing the 2013-14 Annual Report and direct staff to develop and distribute the report.

ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded the motion to approve the proposed approach for completing the 2013-14 Annual Report and direct staff to develop and distribute the report. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Branham notified the Board that the SNC anticipates bringing a final round of Proposition 84 projects for Board consideration to the December meeting. Branham

noted that the expectation is that the Board will authorize the remaining \$400,000 in Proposition 84 funds (absent the Rim Fire funds) at that time. Branham then introduced Bob Kingman and Mt. Whitney Area Manager, Julie Bear.

Kingman, described four projects being recommended for funding in the Mt. Lassen Area (#775, #805, #806, and #802) and Bear, described the two projects from the Mt. Whitney Area (#794, #798).

Boardmember Johnston expressed his view that the projects were well documented, had multiple benefits, and were deserving of high evaluation scores.

Boardmember Kirkwood expressed concern about thinning projects occurring in a context where there are private and public ownerships and there not being clear understanding about what other landowners are doing in the area of a grant. Kirkwood also wondered whether funding a fuels reduction project, where the greatest benefit might be improved grazing, was appropriate. Kingman provided additional information regarding this project in response to the concerns.

ACTION: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded the motion to (a) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Lily Gap Forest Health Project, Phase II (SNC 794), 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, and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for this project; (b) make findings that there is no substantial evidence that the Providence Mine Remediation Project (SNC 775), 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, and authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for this project; (c) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Alpine County Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Healthy Watershed Project (SNC 798); the Upper Stevens Meadow Restoration Project (SNC 802); the Environs Mining Legacy Assessment Project (SNC 805); the Robinson Mine Project (SNC 806); and (d) authorize a grant award 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. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Louise Jensen, Executive Director for Lassen Lands and Trails Trust – expressed appreciation for consideration of the Upper Stephens Meadow Restoration Project

stating that water resources in the area are dire. Jensen noted that Eagle Lake is very low and that native California trout, one ecological value at risk, will benefit from this project. Jensen also acknowledged the federal and state partners, private landowners and non-profits involved in the project.

X. Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan (ACTION) Branham recapped the Action Plan discussion that took place at the June Board meeting highlighting Board direction for staff to prioritize development of a Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan.

Branham referred the Board to the draft State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests Report and asked that recommendations for edits be brought forward immediately to facilitate release of the final report in the coming weeks. Branham reminded Boardmembers that the purpose of the report is to tell the story of the resources at risk and the opportunities to enhance benefits from this Region, as well as to characterize current conditions on many of our forested lands.

Branham also noted that next steps include the development of a SNFCI Action Plan for Board consideration at the December meeting. He explained that the SNFCI Action Plan will provide a sense of how the SNC will approach its role in the Region relating to increasing pace and scale of forest restoration. Branham stated that staff will work with stakeholders to develop regional and watershed level plans that will add on to and enhance efforts that are already underway at the forest level, better quantifying the needs of restoration and the costs associated with it. He noted that the identified need will be compared to existing budgets to identify the gap. Finally, he pointed out the goal would be to identify the restoration targets for a ten year period for each watershed/national forest.

The Board engaged in discussion about elements that staff should consider including in the report to support a need for urgent action. Boardmember Kirkwood asked whether the areas of treatment in Yosemite National Park made a difference in the portions of the Rim Fire that burned there and whether there were numbers or maps there that would be worth adding to the report. Boardmember Giacomini asked whether some national forests would be willing to provide numbers regarding funding gaps, suggesting that this might shore up the argument that there is a problem.

Boardmember Gyant shared that USFS targets are set out of Washington, DC, and explained that forests develop five year vegetation management plans. Branham clarified that the action plan isn't looking to develop a five year vegetation management plan based on anticipated funding, but rather to identify what it will take to bring Sierra forests back to health, using the next ten years as a reference.

Boardmembers discussed the use of prescribed fire and the differences between open burning and combustion in a biomass facility. Gyant described the urgent need to be able to utilize biomass rather than leaving it on the landscape or piling and burning it.

Boardmember Ishida expressed the importance of County Supervisors having a comprehensive understanding of what it will take to restore Sierra forests to health on a large scale in order to advocate for additional resources.

Gyant stated that on USFS land in California there is probably between six and nine million acres of forests backlogged for treatment. Gyant said that they are aiming for 500,000 acres a year for treatment, requiring an additional \$300,000,000 per year to meet that goal, in addition to what is currently in place.

ACTION: Boardmember Roen moved and Boardmember Ishida seconded the motion to approve the "State of Sierra Forests" report and authorize staff to release the report upon finalization; and to approve the draft Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Action Plan and directed staff to work with interested parties in preparing a final draft for Board review and possible approval at the December 2014 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Giacomini said Shasta County passed the Rural County Representative of California resolution addressing the dire conditions of our forests. She also noted that the Eiler Fire surrounded her property, some of her neighbors lost homes, while her family was fortunate in only losing lost miles of fence. She also noted that the site of the Board's June reception was surrounded by the fire. The policy being discussed in SNFCI really needs to be addressed, as USFS and CAL FIRE handle fires differently.

XII. Public Comments

Kerri Timmer, SBC, provided an overview of Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (CAMP). Four of these exist around California, and the goal is to identify various areas to work together and address climate change at a regional level. The goal of Sierra CAMP is to provide a rural perspective to work with other urban efforts. The core team includes SNC, SBC, and others, including local government members, researchers and/or academics.

Branham responded the SNC will participate initially to be sure the project is well understood and whether it fits SNC's core mission and priorities.

XIII. Adjournment

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 12:12 pm.