

Background

Based on previous Board direction and with the goal of building understanding and acceptance among key decision-makers regarding the importance of the Sierra and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to the State's long-term health, SNC Staff has been working to identify and support State policy that recognizes and invests in the Sierra through the SNC. Staff has been also been utilizing key messages to produce educational tools and materials and to implement outreach and communications strategies to increase awareness of the Sierra Nevada Region's important role in the State's long-term environmental and economic well being.

Current Status

SNC Staff continues to track and provide input on issues and questions associated with legislative vehicles such as the water bond, Natural Resources Climate Improvement Program opportunities and other relevant bills.

Water Bond Overview

As of May 1st, there were no less than 10 water bond vehicles making their way through the Legislature. At the time of this writing, seven (7) were still active and making their way through the legislative process, while two (2) were held in committee and one (1) failed passage in committee but was granted reconsideration.

A debate about regional allocation versus direct allocation of funds to specific agencies such as Conservancies is of particular interest to the SNC. The debate is ongoing and the SNC has engaged in a meaningful way to assist the Legislature in navigating this concern with the goal of crafting solutions that work both for recipients of bond proceeds and the citizenry who will benefit from the actions those funds will facilitate.

Importantly, Assemblyman Anthony Rendon (D-Lakewood) amended one of his water bond bills (AB 2554) to include language recognizing the important statewide role the watersheds of the Sierra/Cascade region play in California's water future. In addition to the language, the bill would allocate \$50 million for activities such as those undertaken by the SNC.

Cap and Trade Overview

Legislation introduced by Assembly Member Mark Stone (D-Scotts Valley) and Senator Jim Beall (D-San Jose) may create opportunities and access to Cap and Trade revenue for important Sierra projects. AB 2348 (Stone) and SB 1268 (Beall) both propose the creation of a Natural Resources Climate Improvement Program under which Conservancies and the Wildlife Conservation Board would receive funding to conduct a range of activities to promote the sequestration of carbon, to reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions, and to advance the research needed to achieve the previous two goals. SNC is well positioned to help expend these funds based on our existing programs, the ease of replication of Sierra projects, the incorporation of numerous program goals to achieve multiple benefits, and our ongoing commitment to equitable geographic distribution of project funding.

Other Legislation of Interest

In early April, Senator Fran Pavley (D-Agoura Hills) amended SB 1259 into a bill which would mandate Department of Water Resources (DWR) to implement a variety of studies around the issue of sediment deposition in California's reservoirs and its impact on storage capacity. Specifically, the bill will require DWR to complete an initial study to evaluate cost-effective strategies for sediment removal relative to the costs of alternative methods of flood protection and water supply by January 1, 2017. SNC Staff and The Sierra Fund have raised this issue with Senator Pavley in discussions earlier this year and we are pleased she is addressing it. This coincides with SNC efforts to contract with United States Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct targeted studies around the sedimentation issue in hopes of quantifying storage loss in Sierra reservoirs.

Senator Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) has introduced AB 1086 which would place a park bond on a future ballot. De León has expressed desire to not interfere with the impending water bond, but if the park bond were to go forward there is specific mention of the SNC and funding associated for forest work. It is encouraging to see the Senator (and the incoming President Pro Tem) acknowledging SNC as a viable means through which to implement a park bond.

Outreach and Education Materials and Efforts

Staff has been working to further understanding and awareness of Regional issues both internally and for our key audiences.

To that end, we continue to meet with members of the Legislature to reiterate the importance of investing in California's watersheds and the value of utilizing the SNC as the distribution mechanism for funding in the Region. Staff has held meetings with Assembly Members Brian Dahle and Anthony Rendon, and Senator Jim Nielsen, as well as staff in both houses. Additionally, we are working with partners to coordinate meetings with Sierra delegates to re-emphasize the need to support investment that protects and restores the forests in Sierra Nevada watersheds.

The SNC worked with Sierra Foothill Conservancy, Tuolumne River Trust, and LightHawk (a non-profit organization that provides flight services for no cost) to provide Assembly Members Dahle and Susan Talamantes-Eggman (D-Stockton) an aerial tour of the Rim Fire on May 22nd. The aerial tour may prove to be an effective education tool for policy makers and the SNC looks forward to expanding the partnership with LightHawk, through the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, in the future.

In an effort to create new, interesting ways to tell the Sierra/SNC story and make lasting impressions on our key audiences, staff has been developing two ideas for new methods of communication:

- The first is a series of interactive story maps targeted toward key policymakers in the Los Angeles and Bay Area regions. These maps, which are one part GIS data mapping, one part photos/images, and one part story, are an innovative and

visually-appealing way to convey the direct link between Sierra watersheds and specific downstream communities.

- Second, staff is in the process of developing a proposal to create and regularly utilize a Sierra Fire Season Blog on the SNC Web site. The Fire Blog would utilize Sierra fire events to share information about the wide-spread and long-term impacts that fire and forest management can have on all of California. Blog posts would utilize fires as the hook to get audience attention and then add educational information such as impacts on local communities; relatable facts such as emissions equivalents between fire and annual car emissions or gallons of airline fuel consumed; comparisons between the costs of suppression and the costs of prevention; or recreation, habitat, and watershed impacts.

In an effort to continue developing understanding of Regional issues, the SNC brought together representatives from the USGS, US Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Water Resources, Sierra Pacific Industries, Sierra Water Work Group, The Nature Conservancy and others with an interest in sedimentation to discuss sediment deposition in the Sierra Nevada. The conversation focused on better understanding current and upcoming research, as well as identifying the gaps in knowledge that need to be filled.

SNC partnered with The Nature Conservancy and the US Forest Service on a huge media push to announce the release of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis. The stories are still rolling in, but so far the release has been picked up by at least 21 media outlets including the Wall Street Journal, Capital Public Radio and many local papers. Please visit SNC's [SNC in the News](#) webpage to see the variety of coverage the SNC has received or to read some of the articles.

SNC's 6th Annual Great Sierra River Cleanup will take place on September 20th and preparations are in full swing. Staff has developed artwork, promotional materials, and coordinator resources, and is publicizing the Cleanup on our Web site and through social media. Outreach efforts to new and returning cleanup groups are ongoing and staff held cleanup coordinator training and a webinar in April. Sponsorship procurement efforts will continue through late June, but so far staff has secured commitments from the California Conservation Corps, Sierra Pacific Industries, Sierra Heritage Magazine, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, and Sierra Nevada Brewing Company.

Next Steps

June 26, 2014 is the last day for a legislative measure to qualify for the November General Election ballot. Until that deadline, SNC will continue to schedule meetings with legislators and look for other opportunities to advance their understanding of the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the rest of the State and the importance relying on the SNC's Regional expertise to distribute funding in the Region.

Staff will also continue to consider and develop new and dynamic education tools and messages as well as to utilize the SNC website and social media avenues to connect

water users and policy makers to the critical Sierra Nevada watersheds that provide their water.

September, 2014 will mark the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the SNC. Within that time the SNC has awarded more than \$50 million in grants, formed successful collaborative forest groups, established an annual Sierra-wide volunteer event, developed baseline tracking data for environmental, social, and economic conditions in the Sierra, and shared the Region's best geotouristic destinations with the world – just to mention a few. Today, the SNC continues to support the incredible efforts of our partners throughout the Region, and is still working to improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of our natural and human communities. On the 10 year anniversary of our establishment, the SNC has an opportunity to continue raising the profile of the Sierra Nevada Region by highlighting all of these accomplishments. Staff will be considering ways to engage Boardmembers, partners and grantees to help tell our stories – possibly via Op Eds and our growing social media network.

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.