

Board Meeting MINUTES

December 9 - 10, 2015
Best Western Plus Sonora Oaks
Hotel & Conference Center
19551 Hess Avenue
Sonora, CA 95370



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul administered the Oath of Office to Supervisor Randy Fletcher serving as alternate for the Central Subregion, Supervisor Doug Teeter serving as alternate for the North Central Subregion, and Governor Brown's appointee, Terrence O'Brien.

III. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, Todd Ferrara, John Brissenden, Pam Giacomini, Randy Fletcher, Louis Boitano, Allen Ishida, Bob Johnston, Terrence O'Brien, Ron Hames, Doug Teeter, Este Stifel, and Woody Smeck

Absent: Bernie Gyant and Bob Kirkwood

IV. Closed Session (This portion of the meeting is not open to the public.)

The Board met in closed session to evaluate the performance of the Executive Officer.

V. Approval of September 3, 2015, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Louis Boitano moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve the September 3, 2015, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Public Comments

No public comment at this time.

VII. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair BJ Kirwan announced that language has been filed with state officials with the intent of qualifying the "Water Supply Reliability and Drought Protection Act of 2016" for next November's ballot. A copy of the initiative is included in Agenda Item VIIIb and she noted that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy is identified for a \$150 million allotment.

VIII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham announced the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was awarded the United States Forest Service Region 5 Regional

Foresters Honor Award of 2015 Partnership of the Year Award accepted by Assistant Executive Officer, Bob Kingman.

a. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Chief, Amy Lussier, reported that in the Fiscal Year 16-17 budget, it is expected that SNC's budget should return to normal as it is not expected that there will be an Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF) reduction. She also indicated the SNC is expected to receive funds to offset the increase costs of Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS), which provides accounting services to the SNC.

The new state FI\$Cal system is now in wave 2 of implementation and SNC started using it as of August 12, 2015. Unfortunately, the transition has resulted in delays in bill payment, which is out of the control of the SNC. This has resulted in SNC internet services being shut off twice and our CAL-Cards currently being shut off. Administrative staff have been working with vendors and grantees to explain the situation. Lussier and Branham will be coordinating with the nine other Resource agencies who also use CFS services, to find a resolution to this issue.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Angela Avery, introduced Elizabeth Betancourt, who recently joined the SNC as a Policy Analyst.

Avery updated the Board on where SNC is in terms of in-Region partnerships and engagements. Avery stated that SNC continues to focus on the Sierra Climate and Adaptation Mitigation Program (CAMP) which has just reached its one year mark. The Sierra CAMP program has developed a Climate Adaptation Plan which will include the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). The SNC is reaching out to key Regional partners to participate in a mini summit in January.

Avery added that, at the state level, the SNC continues to be involved in many activities with a focus on forest health. The California Air Resources Board (ARB) is currently in the process of updating the AB 32 scoping plan document and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investment Plan. The SNC is actively participating in these activities through the Forest Climate Action Team (FCAT) and will provide input through the FCAT's creation of a Forest Carbon Action Plan. SNC is also actively involved in the Natural and Working Lands Working group, which has been organized by the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to gather input for the scoping plan update. Climate adaptation will be considered in this plan.

She also updated the Board on SNC involvement with the Federal Resilient Lands and Water /California Headwaters Designation, a science synthesis

report on the effects of forest management in reducing GGH emissions, and the Governor's Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF).

The SNC continues to be a leader, particularly in the social media realm. Avery provided kudos to Brittany Covich and Belinda Gutierrez of SNC staff for all of the work they have done in this area. She noted that the SNC is testing a new social media program during this Board meeting to provide video stream via Twitter.

Avery concluded her report by showing a video produced about the SNC's Great Sierra River Cleanup event.

c. Report on the Butte Fire

Branham, provided background for the Butte Fire presentation, pointing out printed information that was provided showing the fire area compared to what was modeled in the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis. Branham also pointed out that SNC has been involved in a tremendous amount of activity over the past eight years in the Mokelumne River watershed where the Butte Fire occurred. Branham introduced Steve Wilensky, a former SNC Boardmember and Calaveras County Board Supervisor. Wilensky is the current president of the Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS) and started the program by presenting a thank you video to Boardmembers and staff for SNC support over the years. Wilensky presented a second video demonstrating some of the damage resulting from the Butte Fire. Wilensky described the extreme fire behavior, the loss of structures and social impacts associated with the fire.

Wilensky discussed policy issues that have been learned from this fire and stated, "When we work in the forest, it works." Wilensky further stated that multiple towns were saved because of the work that had been done previously, allowing firefighters to get access to these threatened areas. Wilensky stated that the investment in forest system infrastructure is something we should all devote some significant time to and he feels that we need policy shifts in the state of California, "before we are all lost."

Boardmembers Louis Boitano, Allen Ishida, Ron Hames, Bob Johnston, and John Brissenden thanked Wilensky for the presentation and expressed their sympathy and support for continued efforts to accomplish the work and policy changes suggested in the presentation.

Branham followed up indicating there is an urgent need to speak up about these issues. Branham stated that we need to have the same urgency to find the resources to prevent large damaging fires rather than finding the resources to deal with the fires when they occur, which is a major focus of the WIP.

- d. Miscellaneous Updates
No Miscellaneous Updates provided.

IX. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Christine Sproul announced the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and the California Natural Resources Agency have begun the process to amend the CEQA guidelines. Sproul stated that it will probably take more than a year to complete the amendment process. The SNC has been watching these issues to assist in making our bond funds more productive.

Sproul also stated that she will provide a reminder of proper and improper activities during the development and pursuit of Water Bond proposal development.

X. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (ACTION)

Boardmember John Brissenden nominated BJ Kirwan as Board Chair, and Pam Giacomini as Board Vice-Chair for the 2016 calendar year. There were no other nominations.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to elect BJ Kirwan as the 2016 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Louis Boitano seconded, a motion to elect Boardmember Pam Giacomini as the 2016 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. 2016 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

Executive Officer Jim Branham presented the Board meeting schedule, noting that staff was recommending reversing the order of the two-day March Meeting and start the Board meeting on Wednesday, March 2, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. The WIP Summit would follow on Thursday morning.

ACTION: Boardmember Pam Giacomini moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve the proposed Board meeting schedule for 2016. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. SNC Strategic Action Plan (ACTION)

Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Angela Avery, summarized the actions taken with the draft strategic action plan since last submitted for the Board's review. Avery stated that three letters with comments were submitted and are in the Board package for their review. Avery informed the Board that Boardmember Bob Kirkwood provided his comments in advance of this meeting.

Boardmember Pam Giacomini stated it is a very well done document and thanked Boardmember John Brissenden and Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery for their hard work on this.

ACTION: Boardmember Doug Teeter moved, and Boardmember Randy Fletcher seconded, a motion to approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2016-19 Strategic Action Plan, including the January 2016-June 2017 actions. The motion passed unanimously.

XIII. 2014-15 Annual Report (ACTION)

Policy and Outreach Division Chief, Angela Avery, presented the proposed outline and format for the 2014-2015 Annual Report stating that the Watershed Improvement Program would be the primary focus of the report. Avery informed the Board that this report will also contain all information required by the statutes.

ACTION: Boardmember Bob Johnston moved, and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded, a motion to approve the proposed approach for completing the 2014-15 Annual Report. The motion passed unanimously.

XIV. 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant Awards (ACTION)

Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman, introduced Mt Lassen Area Manager, Andy Fristensky, and Mt. Whitney Area Manager, Randi Jorgenson.

Fristensky informed the Board that the SNC received twenty applications on September 1, 2016, and that of those, thirteen were Category 1 projects, and seven were Category 2 projects. He further shared that the applications came from fifteen individual organizations from a wide geographical range, and that five of the twenty were being recommended for approval.

Fristensky presented an overview of the three Mt. Lassen Area projects proposed for approval (Project #828, Project #832, and Project #835). Kingman added that the three projects Fristensky reviewed had CEQA exemptions.

Jorgensen, presented an overview of the two Mt. Whitney Area projects proposed for approval (Project #843, and Project #845).

The Board engaged in a discussion about the need for additional project information including requesting project acreage in a summary table. They also requested more detailed maps and landscape context in staff reports, and asked how proposed project costs are evaluated and determined to be reasonable.

Kingman assured the Board that staff would evaluate what additional detail could reasonably be added to staff reports and reminded the Board that SNC policy

requires a site visit for each Category 1 project prior to recommendations. He also noted that the SNC relies heavily on input from professional external evaluators including foresters when making project recommendations.

Additional discussion was had regarding SNC plans for project applications received but not included in current recommendations, as well as the ways SNC and grantees will communicate and promote the impacts and results of awarded projects. Kingman confirmed that staff will continue to work with applicants to revise and resubmit applications and that project leads and the SNC communications team will work with grantees to promote the successes of these grants upon completion.

Boardmember Doug Teeter noted he would recuse himself from the vote on Project #835 because he sits on the applicant's Board of Directors.

ACTION: Boardmember Louis Boitano moved, and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded, a motion to (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Hirschman's Pond Forest Health Project (SNC 828), the Diamond Mountain Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 832), the Magalia Forest Health Management Project (SNC 835), the Oak Creek Watershed Restoration Project (SNC 843), and the Big Tree Creek Watershed Forest Restoration (SNC 845); and (b) 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. Boardmember Doug Teeter recused himself from the approval on Project 835. The motion passed unanimously.

- XV. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Regional Strategy (ACTION)**
Executive Officer Jim Branham pointed out to the Board that the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is providing many different positive benefits to the SNC by way of public and private engagement.

Watershed Improvement Program Coordinator, Mandy Vance, directed Boardmembers to the full length draft WIP Regional Strategy provided in Board materials noting that the version was developed without heavy input from the Forest Service. Vance also noted that the Forest Service was in the process of review and that their suggestions would be integrated into the final document. Vance also reported that SNC would post the final draft for partner review with the goal of finalizing by the March Board meeting.

An overview of the WIP Partner Webinar that the SNC co-hosted with the Forest Service in early October, which reached more than 130 participants, was provided and critical areas of the WIP strategy including Regional Level Issues,

information that is currently under development, *and* Watershed Level Assessments on both public and private lands were highlighted.

Special thanks were given to United States Forest Service Staff, Jerry Bird, Genny Wilson, Boardmember Barnie Gyant, and Randy Moore, as well as Tom Quinn and his staff at the Tahoe National Forest, for their work in advancing the forest level assessments. Additional thanks and recognition were given to Boardmember Este Stifel and Bill Haigh from the Bureau of Land Management for their support and preliminary work; and Boardmember Woody Smeck, Don Neubacher, Ray Murray, and Linda Mazzu for initial WIP engagement with the National Park Service.

Boardmembers were encouraged to review the WIP website which provides a link to the WIP endorsement as well as marketing and informational tools for use when discussing the WIP with potential partners.

Branham reported that the SNC is considering a potential partnership with the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) who is working with the California Biodiversity Council and looking at the possibility of including the WIP as a demonstration project of its Integrated Regional Conservation and Development Program.

Branham reported that prior to this meeting, the Board WIP Committee of Bob Kirkwood and Pam Giacomini identified the need to identify pilots where new models to deliver restoration work at an increased pace and scale could be explored. That concept will be included in the revised Regional Strategy. He also acknowledged that Boardmember Bob Johnston provided prior comments about the WIP Regional Strategy, which suggested inclusion of a call for standardization of data systems used in the Region and strengthening the analytical content of the document.

Boardmember Doug Teeter suggested revisions to the Regional Strategy in two areas:

1. Attachment B, page 6: Add a sentence regarding possible income from the work being done.
2. Appendix A, Attachment B page 16: Add federal plans that will be published to the list.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Pam Giacomini seconded, a motion to approve the draft Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Plan Regional Strategy and direct staff to finalize it following review and input from the United States Forest Service and other partners. The motion passed unanimously.

XVI. Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition Grant (ACTION)

Dr. Louise Bedsworth, Deputy Director, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, joined SNC to provide an overview of the Natural Disaster Resiliency Competition (NDRC) Grant. Dr. Bedsworth reported this grant is through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), specifically through the Community Development Block Grant Program. This is the first time that these funds have been taken and awarded competitively following a state disaster.

HUD aggregated \$1 billion in funds for this grant competition. Bedsworth stated there were 67 qualifying jurisdictions, California had a total of three federally declared qualifying disasters, and the attention was focused on the Rim Fire disaster based on scale and the tie to our water supply.

Bedsworth said the total grant application dollar amount requested was \$117 million to support an integrated program on community and watershed resilience. Investments would go into three broad areas.

Bedsworth advised the Board of the timelines, a decision is expected by early January 2016. The funds do need to be spent within a two to five year time period.

Brissenden asked about funds available for fire preventative actions would be a part of the grant. Bedsworth indicated that this particular funding can only be used in the Rim Fire footprint, so generally preventative actions would not be undertaken.

Public Comment: Ron Ringen, a Tuolumne County resident, requested the SNC consult with Supervisor Brennan and Supervisor Hanvelt in moving forward with using this grant as an "example" for future projects and grant applications, given concerns the County had with the process.

ACTION: Boardmember Pam Giacomini moved, and Boardmember Allen Ishida seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer, contingent upon the award of funds from the Natural Disaster Resilience Competition, to enter necessary and appropriate agreements to administer the Forest and Watershed Health and Biomass and Wood Products Facility activities identified in the application, provided that adequate funding is provided to the Conservancy. The motion passed unanimously

XVII. Boardmembers' Comments

Board Chair BJ Kirwan announced that Boardmember Louis Boitano will be leaving the Board again and presented Boitano with an SNC backpack for his service. Boitano thanked fellow Boardmembers and SNC staff for the great work that has been done during his two tenures on the Board.

XVIII. Public Comments

No public comment at this time.

XIX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

Next meeting in Sacramento, March 2 and 3, 2016.