

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016
General Gomez ARTS & Events Center
808 Lincoln Way
Auburn, CA 95603



I. Call to Order

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: BJ Kirwan, Julie Alvis, Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez, Bob Kirkwood, Ron Hames, Burt Bundy, Jennifer Montgomery, Christopher Wright, Este Stifel, Bernie Gyant, John Brissenden, Terrence O'Brien, and Allen Ishida

Absent: Pam Giacomini, Woody Smeck, and Bob Johnston

III. Approval of September 8, 2016, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Bob Kirkwood moved, and Boardmember Burt Bundy seconded, a motion to approve the September 8, 2016, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comments

Barbara Steinberg, Outreach Coordinator with the California Watchable Wildlife organization, provided thanks to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) for its support through sponsorship of the California Watchable Wildlife annual photo contest.

V. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair BJ Kirwan provided the Board with a few words regarding her time spent on the SNC Governing Board. Kirwan complimented the staff and SNC by highlighting some of the organization's accomplishments.

VI. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (ACTION)

The Board had a brief discussion on the past practices relating to the selection of the Chair and Vice Chair.

ACTION: Boardmember BJ Kirwan moved, and Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery seconded, a motion to elect Boardmember John Brissenden as the 2017 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Chair. The motion passed unanimously. Boardmember John Brissenden abstained.

ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Allen Ishida seconded, a motion to elect Boardmember Terrence O'Brien as the 2017 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 2

VII. 2017 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery moved, and Boardmember Bob Kirkwood seconded, a motion to approve the proposed Board meeting schedule for 2017. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. 2015-17 Proposition 1 Grant Awards (ACTION)

Mt Lassen Area:

Mt. Lassen Area Manager Andy Fristensky described the seven Mt. Lassen Area projects being recommended to the Board for approval:

- Project #853 – Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project
- Project #879 – Post-Fire Restoration in the Rubicon Watershed
- Project #899 – Genesee Valley Watershed Improvement Project
- Project #901 – Lassen Creek Watershed Restoration Project
- Project #903 – Rice’s Crossing Preserve Nonindustrial Timber Management Planning Project
- Project #908 – Tásmam Kojóm Restoration Management Plan
- Project #909 – Forest Health and Watershed Improvement through Noxious Weed Management

Boardmembers engaged in conversation with SNC staff regarding the seven projects presented by Fristensky. Boardmember Bob Kirkwood requested additional information regarding private land owner contribution towards projects #879, #901, and #909. Fristensky responded by stating that project #879 and #901 both have private land owner contributions. Regarding project #909, Bob Kingman added that staff have been working closely with the Truckee River Watershed Council who recognize the need for investment in treating invasive plant species, and stated that investment from public and private sources has increased and are recognizing the need to restore and protect the upper river watersheds. Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery added information about project #909 and agreed with Kirkwood on the need of added documentation on additional funding sources and contributing agencies such as tribal organizations.

Boardmember Terrence O’Brien asked additional questions regarding funding Honey Lake Biomass Facility, project #901. Fristensky addressed the question by stating that there is a special clause built into the grant which will require the facility to obtain a contract for biomass materials prior to receiving any funding from SNC. Fristensky continued to state that the hope for this project is ultimately to obtain a contract that will allow them to obtain funding from SNC and other sources as well. O’Brien asked for clarification of the boundaries of the project and the priority of the project as follow up to the concerns expressed relating to private land owner contribution. Kingman provided additional information regarding the negotiation of the contract noting that the funding was contingent upon contract negotiation.

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 3

Boardmember Ron Hames asked for letters of support to be provided with the application information provided in Boardmember materials.

Mt Whitney Area:

Mt. Whitney Area Manager Randi Jorgensen described the three Mt. Whitney Area projects being recommended for approval:

- Project #880 – Eastern Madera Wildfire Restoration Project
- Project #897 – Lyons-South Fork Watershed Forest Resiliency Project
- Project #911 – Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project

Kirkwood asked questions about private land owner contribution to project #880, the Eastern Madera Wildfire Restoration Project. His questions were addressed by Supervisor Tom Wheeler, Madera County, who is also the Chairman of the Yosemite Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council (RCD) and Justine Reynolds who was there representing the Yosemite Sequoia RCD. Reynolds stated that they have support from surrounding partners but no actual funding at this point.

Additional Boardmember discussion took place regarding watershed projects and benefit to the surrounding areas as well as downstream benefits. The discussion included the suggested requirement that this type of information be added to SNC Grant Guidelines.

Public Comment:

Duane Nelson, District Ranger, Placerville Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest, thanked the SNC for funding the planning grant for the Caples Creek restoration project, and highlighted the importance of the project for protecting communities and an important water supply. Nelson also stated that they anticipate at least one hundred percent match by the United States Forest Service (USFS) for the project #853 currently before the Board.

Dan Corcoran, El Dorado Irrigation District, spoke on behalf of the Caples Creek restoration project #853, stating that Caples Creek is a primary watershed for over one million people in the Sacramento area.

Jack Love, Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project #911, who will be the onsite manager for the project, thanked SNC staff Michael Pickard for the assistance in development of their grant application. Love provided highlights of this project and stated that the project is in direct alignment with the goals of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program.

Matt Freitas, Program Manager, Truckee River Watershed Council, expressed thanks to the Board and staff of SNC for funding past projects and for staff guidance through the current grant process. Mr. Freitas stated that the Truckee River Watershed Council is looking forward to future work with SNC and the

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 4

Board to favorably consider Project #909. Brenda Gilbert, Development Director, Truckee River Watershed Council, also urged the Board to approve the project.

Elisa Noble, Executive Director, Placer Resource Conservation District, spoke on behalf of project # 879 and thanked the SNC Staff and Board for consideration of the project. Noble also commented on the complementary private land work that is being done in the Region and highlighted the benefits of the project.

Ken Holbrook, Maidu Summit Consortium, addressed the Board on behalf of the Tásmam Kojóm Restoration Management Plan #908 and advised the Board that this area was affected by the Chips Fire. Holbrook identified project match funding sources including the Stewardship Council and acknowledged the great work of Andy Fristensky and Lynn Campbell.

Tom Haglund, General Manager, Tuolumne Utilities District, thanked Michael Pickard for his support in developing their application and highlighted the benefits of project #897 for water supply protection.

Tom Wheeler, Madera County Supervisor, commented on the Eastern Madera Wildfire Restoration Project #880 and noted the important role the local Integrated Regional Watershed Management (IRWM) group played in project development.

ACTION: Boardmember Allen Ishida moved, and Boardmember Bob Kirkwood seconded, a motion that the Board (a) authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Exemption for the Post-Fire Restoration in the Rubicon Watershed Project (SNC879), the Eastern Madera Wildfire Restoration Project (SNC880), the Lyons-South Fork Watershed Forest Resiliency Project (SNC897), the Genesee Valley Watershed Improvement Project (SNC899), the Rice's Crossing Preserve Forest Management Planning Project (SNC903), the Tásmam Kojóm Restoration Management Plan (SNC908), the Forest Health and Watershed Improvement through Noxious Weed Management Project (SNC909), and the Gentry Creek Watershed Restoration Project (SNC911); and (b) approve findings concurring in the Negative Declaration and Nonindustrial Timber Management Plans, and authorize the Executive Officer to file Notices of Determination as a Responsible Agency for the Caples Creek Watershed Ecological Restoration Project (SNC853), and the Lassen Creek Watershed Restoration Project (SNC901); and (c) authorize a grant award to each of the above listed projects for the amounts recommended by staff, and further authorize the staff to enter into the necessary agreements for the recommended projects. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 5

IX. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Administrative Update

Amy Lussier, Administrative Division Chief, provided a brief Administrative update to the Board. Lussier announced to the Board that SNC has hired Amanda Grant as its new procurement contracts analyst.

Lussier provided a budget update to the Board, and discussed changes that the state is making to the budgeting process. She notified the Board that the past year's budget has not been closed by Contracted Fiscal Services (CFS) and a delinquency notice will be sent to SNC. This is a known issue and is not isolated to SNC.

Lussier also updated the Board on the ongoing CFS issues and discussions with the California Natural Resources Agency. She noted that there will be no changes in the 2016-17 fiscal year regarding CFS. Following Lussier's update, a brief Boardmember discussion took place regarding the current issues with CFS.

b. Policy and Outreach Update

Angela Avery, Policy and Outreach Manager, provided a legislative update: Two new versions of the Park Bond were introduced, Assembly Bill (AB) 18 – Garcia, for a total of \$3,005,000,000, to finance a clean water climate coastal protection and outdoor access program. The total State Conservancy allocation is \$145 million, of that allocation the SNC has been identified to receive \$25 million. In this bill, SNC has also been identified to administer an additional \$50 million in cooperation with CAL FIRE. The second version proposed by Senate Pro Tem Kevin de León is for a total of \$3 billion with \$120 million allocated for State Conservancies and Authority Funding with the direct amount for each conservancy to be determined by the legislature.

Avery continued by updating the Board on the current status of the Forest Carbon Plan. The SNC was asked to take a lead role in updating the Plan to help strengthen the content. Three staff from SNC are contributing to this Plan: Nic Enstice, Elizabeth Betancourt, and Ali Sambucetti.

Avery provided a brief update on the latest information regarding the Little Hoover Commission hearings on the impacts of tree mortality and said that SNC will be submitting comments as well as providing testimony at the hearing.

Avery said that, while the SNC is not directly involved, staff is tracking the progress of the potential of establishing a bicameral caucus of legislators to form a statewide watershed caucus with the purpose of addressing watershed issues.

Avery recognized SNC staff member Elizabeth Betancourt for the coordination of a meeting to connect upper watershed issues with urban issues. This meeting included partners from the American River watershed including Placer County Water Agency, Placer County Air Quality Control

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 6

District, and other partners from the Sacramento metropolitan area. Avery said the meeting was well attended and the primary take away was the interest from downstream beneficiaries and the commitment to continue to explore opportunities for upstream investment.

Avery provided a brief update on the Natural Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) Grant and introduced Elliot Vander Kolk who joined the team and will be working on the NDRC Grant coordination. Avery stated that there is no grant agreement at this time. SNC retired annuitant, Erin Healy, is assisting with the contracting side of the grant.

Avery reported to the Board on the status of the SNC partnership with USFS on the CA Headwater Partnership. Avery said the final report from the CA Headwaters Partnership was published at the end of November and offered to make the report available to anyone who requested it.

Communications and Outreach Manager Brittany Covich provided the Board with a wrap-up presentation on the SNC Great Sierra River Cleanup (GSRC) stating that over 35,000 pounds of trash were removed from the Sierra by over 1,500 volunteers. Covich displayed Sierra Watershed Protection Week social media graphics developed by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and provided special recognition to Belinda Gutierrez for her work pushing out these posts.

Covich stated that the communications team continues to track Sierra wildfires and provided notice of two videos that SNC will be releasing over the next couple weeks. These videos were created to demonstrate the value of proactive forest restoration.

Boardmember Bob Kirkwood acknowledged the policy document provided in the Board materials and suggested that this report be used as the backbone for the annual report. Kirkwood stated that this paper is an interesting summation of SNC work and it is very well done. Staff indicated that it was probably too late to specifically call out the policy document, but many of the issues are discussed in the Annual Report.

c. Tribal Forum Discussion Report

SNC Tribal Liaison Julie Griffith-Flatter updated the Board on the tribal meeting which took place on December 7, 2016. Griffith-Flatter stated that most of the discussion centered on the SNC Prop 1 grant process and how we can integrate tribes in the process. Discussion also centered on defining the consultation process occurring during the grant application process. A specific request was made for SNC to strengthen the tribal involvement in the grant guidelines and how can the state tribal liaison office and the Governor's Tribal Advisor get involved in the application process.

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 7

Griffith-Flatter referred to action items listed in the staff report and provided the Board with an update on these items.

Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery and Boardmember Terrence O'Brien engaged in brief conversation with staff regarding overall impressions of the meeting which included tribal members being encouraged to put their names in for consideration on the Board as well as the need for increased outreach efforts.

d. Tree Mortality Task Force Update

Randi Jorgensen, SNC Tree Mortality Task Force (TMTF) Representative, provided the Board with a current status of the TMTF. She stated that the scale of this issue has increased dramatically since the inception of the Task Force. The Forest Service released new mortality numbers on November 18, 2016, of over 102 million since 2010, identifying 69 million in 2016 alone. Jorgensen added that the issue of tree mortality is having a devastating effect on the economy in the southern Sierra.

Jorgensen provided an overview of the workgroups developed by the TMTF. These groups include Public Outreach, Forest Health and Resilience, Mapping and Monitoring, Resource Allocation, Regulations, Utilization - Bioenergy, and Utilization - Market Development.

Jorgensen stated that a total of \$568,444 has been awarded by the SNC for tree mortality issues to date, and approval of the currently recommended tree mortality-focused grants will result in a total of just over \$1.5 million invested in this critical issue. SNC will continue to identify opportunities for funding tree mortality projects and improve collaborative efforts to address mortality issues.

e. New Boardmember Orientation

Executive Officer Jim Branham updated the Board with plans to provide an orientation for newly appointed county supervisors and Boardmembers. Branham said that tentative plans are to schedule two orientations, one each in the Mt. Lassen and Mt. Whitney areas.

f. Lake Almanor Water Trail Project Update

Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman introduced Courtney Gomola, Sierra Fellows Coordinator from The Sierra Institute for Community and Environment. Gomola told the Board that she is currently the Watershed Coordinator for the Lake Almanor Watershed Group which was a group appointed by the Plumas County Board of Supervisors in 2005 to serve as an advisory group for the Almanor Watershed. Gomola provided a PowerPoint presentation providing background and highlighting accomplishments of the recently completed Lake Almanor water trail project. Gomola named the many contributors to the water trails map project, which includes Caribou Alliance for Trails; Mountain Meadows Conservancy; USFS; PG&E; Maidu Summit Consortium; Plumas Audubon; Point Blue; SNC; Rose Foundation; Westwood Parks and

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 8

Recreation; Sierra Institute for Community and Environment; and local anglers, historians, and private donors. She stated that the full launch for the Lake Almanor water trail map is planned for spring of 2017.

g. **Miscellaneous Updates**

Executive Officer Jim Branham provided thanks to the Subregion representatives who have served on the Board and hope to see continued interaction from each of them. Branham also thanked Board Chair BJ Kirwan for her time on the Governing Board.

X. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul told SNC staff and Boardmembers that she is retiring from State service and will no longer serve as the Conservancy legal counsel. Sproul provided an introduction to the SNC's new in-house legal counsel, Lisa Hightower.

XI. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Jim Branham provided a report to the Board on the status of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) and directed the Boardmembers to the staff report provided in the Board materials. Branham introduced the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative as an additional component of the WIP and said that the support from the Tahoe Conservancy has added interest and value to the project.

Boardmember Bob Kirkwood encouraged this pilot project and said that he would like to see it go one step further by attaching a fee to downstream water users that would be spent on upper watershed protection.

Boardmember Bernie Gyant provided a USFS WIP Forest Assessments presentation which focused on the current Tahoe National Forest Assessment. Gyant stated that an incentive of \$10,000 would be provided to Forests that are able to complete their assessments. Gyant said that assessments are due by January 2017. A printed copy of the report can be found in the December Board meeting materials package.

Boardmembers engaged in brief conversation regarding the assessment presentation.

XII. Expenditure of Remaining Proposition 84 Funds (ACTION)

Executive Officer Jim Branham informed the Board there is approximately \$175,000 in recovered Proposition 84 funds and that amount may increase as active grants close-out. Branham recommended a process for expending the remainder of all Proposition 84 funds, including delegating authority to the Executive Officer to approve and execute grants. Branham stated if additional guidance was needed on CEQA issues, then staff would return to the Board.

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 9

ACTION: Boardmember Ron Hames moved, and Boardmember Bob Kirkwood seconded, a motion to delegate authority to the Executive Officer to approve and execute grants consistent with the criteria stated in the December 8, Agenda Item XII staff report, for remaining Proposition 84 funds and to report all new grants approved to the Board. The motion passed unanimously.

XIII. Discussion on Key Issues for the 2017-18/2018-19 Proposition 1 Grant Guidelines (INFORMATIONAL)

Assistant Executive Officer Bob Kingman introduced a set of topics for discussion related to the preparation of revised Grant Guidelines for the Board's consideration. Kingman highlighted and reviewed specific issues including acquisitions, tree mortality, private timberlands, meadow restoration, and the schedule for administering the next grant round.

Kingman stated that the guidelines will essentially stay the same, but recommends some minor adjustments. Boardmember Terrence O'Brien expressed a desire to see the Board consider some land acquisition projects, providing the example of the need to protect a Giant Sequoia grove and stated the Board should not be precluded from having the flexibility to consider the project. Boardmember Bob Kirkwood stated if acquisition is included in the guidelines, it should be highlighted that there are special characteristics of the land being acquired, such as an addition of a sequoia grove to the Calaveras-Big Trees State Park. O'Brien agreed that there should be language to address the special nature of a project to reduce the number of acquisition applications.

In discussion on the application and award schedule, Boardmembers identified a need for adequate lead time to accommodate applicants. Additionally, Boardmembers reminded the staff to include engagement of those downstream beneficiaries in the evaluation criteria in the new guidelines.

Next steps will be to present draft guidelines for Board review in March 2017 and final guidelines for Board approval in June 2017.

XIV. Discussion of Placer County Community Choice Aggregation (INFORMATIONAL)

Placer County Treasurer-Tax Collector Jenine Windeshausen provided a presentation to the Board on Placer County's effort to establish a Community Choice Aggregation. Windeshausen defined Community Choice Aggregation and the benefits of this integrated energy strategy. She described the county's progress to date and the next steps in the process.

Boardmembers engaged in brief conversation about the Community Choice Aggregation issues and benefits. Windeshausen discussed the possibility of rural counties coming together as a joint powers authority to enable them access to this program.

Board Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2016

Page 10

XV. 2015-16 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Annual Report (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Bob Kirkwood moved, and Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery seconded, a motion to approve the proposed approach for completing the 2015-16 Annual Report and direct staff to develop and distribute the report. The motion passed unanimously.

XVI. Boardmembers' Comments

Board Chair BJ Kirwan acknowledged Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez who will be representing the Department of Finance in 2017 and Julie Alvis who was representing Natural Resources Agency. Kirwan acknowledged the fantastic job that all six departing Supervisors have done during their terms as Boardmembers.

Boardmember Jennifer Montgomery thanked everyone for coming to Placer County.

Boardmember Christopher Wright expressed appreciation for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and promised to stay engaged after his term as Boardmember.

Boardmember Allen Ishida reminisced about his multiple terms on the Board and recommended staff pay attention to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Boardmember John Brissenden thanked Board Chair BJ Kirwan for her service.

XVII. Public Comments

There were no public comments at this time.

Adjournment

Board Chair BJ Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 1:34 p.m.