

### **Background**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was allocated \$54 million in Proposition 84, passed by the voters in 2006. Approximately \$40 million has been awarded to date to a variety of projects consistent with Proposition 84 requirements and SNC's governing statute.

At its September 2011 meeting, the SNC Board directed staff to finalize the current Grant Guidelines and timeline for the FY 2011-12 grant cycle to support the Healthy Forests focus area, as identified in SNC's Strategic Plan.

The Board also confirmed at the June 2011 meeting that half (approximately \$5 million) of the remaining dollars available to the SNC through Proposition 84 would be allocated in the grant cycle for FY 2012-13 to support the Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands area of focus. Staff began working on formal and informal outreach with Resource Conservation Districts, agricultural landowners, land trusts and other stakeholders this past spring.

### **Current Status**

SNC staff has developed the draft timeline below and is revising the Grant Guidelines for Proposition 84 Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands for FY 2012-13. These draft Grant Guidelines will include all revisions made as the result of considering comments received during the public comment period, as well additional public input and staff analysis. If approved at the June 2012 Board meeting, the final guidelines will be made available to potential applicants later that month. A companion Grant Application Packet (GAP) with necessary forms and instructions will also be available to assist applicants at that time.

The main objective of the 2012-13 program will be to assist in maintaining the viability of agricultural lands and ranches in the Sierra, with projects that lead to, or result in, protection of watersheds and the natural resources within the watershed (Proposition 84 requirements). Preliminary examples of potential projects could include, but are not limited to: removal of invasive weeds, stream restoration, riparian fencing, conservation easements and actions necessary for such easements (i.e. appraisals, surveys, etc.), as well as other eligible projects that allow current agricultural activities to continue.

### **Next Steps**

Based on Board direction, staff intends to conduct additional outreach to interested parties on project opportunities and bring back draft Grant Guidelines for Board discussion at the March 2012 meeting, with approval proposed for the June 2012 meeting. Staff will also consider the processes used for the Healthy Forests grant cycle, to determine if any other changes are necessary, with a particular focus on the pre-application process. Once the Board has approved the 2012-13 Proposition 84 Grant Guidelines, staff will conduct outreach to stakeholders to solicit potential applications.

<b>GRANT PROGRAM ELEMENTS</b>	<b>Target Date or Duration</b>
<b>DRAFT GUIDELINES REVIEW PERIOD</b>	February 13 – March 16, 2012
<b>BOARD ADOPTS GUIDELINES</b>	June 7, 2012
<b>RELEASE Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands GUIDELINES AND GAPS</b>	June 18, 2012
<b>PRE-APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMITTAL:</b> SNC staff will be available to work with applicants on preparation of pre-applications to be submitted during this period.	June 18 – July 13, 2012
<b>FULL APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT AND SUBMITTAL:</b> Applicants who receive an invitation to submit a full application will develop and refine their full application during this period.	August 15 – October 19, 2012
<b>FULL APPLICATION EVALUATION/REVIEW:</b> SNC staff and technical evaluators will evaluate all complete applications, resulting in a score up to 100 points. Consultation with the Board Subregional subcommittees, as well as communication with affected local agencies will occur during this period.	October 22, 2012 – January 18, 2013
<b>FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO SNC BOARD:</b> Staff will provide recommendations based on the evaluation, including consideration of geographic distribution of projects.	March 7, 2013

**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.**