



June 3, 2010  
[Turtle Rock Park  
Community Center](#)  
17300 State Route 89  
Markleeville, CA 96120

**June 2, 2010**  
**Board Tour**

**10:00 – 12:30 PM**

Members of the Board and Staff will participate in a field trip focusing on issues and activities relevant to the Conservancy's mission in the East Subregion. The field trip will begin at 10:00AM at Turtle Rock Park Community Center located at 17300 State Route 89, Markleeville, CA 96120 and will conclude at approximately 12:30PM. Members of the public are invited to participate in the field tour but are responsible for their own transportation and lunch.

**Board Workshop**

**1:30 – 5:00 PM**

The SNC Board, staff and members of the public will discuss the SNC's progress to date and key issues to be addressed in the upcoming Strategic Plan Update. This will take place at the Turtle Rock Park Community Center.

**Reception**

**5:30 – 7:00 PM**

Following the Board workshop the Boardmembers and staff will participate in a reception held at [Sorensen's Resort](#) 14255 Highway 88, Hope Valley, CA 96120. The public is invited.

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**Board Meeting**  
**June 3, 2010**

**9:00 – 1:00 PM**

*(End time of the meeting is approximate)*

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **Approval of March 3, 2010 Meeting Minutes**
- IV. **Public Comments**  
Provide an opportunity for the public to comment on non-agenda items.
- V. **Chairman's Report**  
The Board will discuss the proposed Subregion location change for the September and December 2010 meetings.
- VI. **Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**
  - a. [Budget and Staffing](#)
  - b. [Recap of Strategic Planning Workshop and Next Steps](#)
  - c. [Grants Update](#)
  - d. [East Subregion Report](#)
  - e. [Sierra Day in the Capitol](#)
  - f. [Geotourism Update](#)

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**VII. [Proposed Changes to the Conservancy's Conflict of Interest Code \(ACTION\)](#)**

The Board will review and may approve the proposed changes to the Conflict of Interest Code pursuant to Government Code 87302.

**VIII. [Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative \(ACTION\)](#)**

The Board will consider and may adopt a resolution in support of the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative.

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

[Attachment C](#)

**IX. [Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council \(INFORMATIONAL\)](#)**

The Board will review and may comment on an initial set of services the Conservancy could perform to ensure long-term public beneficial values for lands transferred by the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council.

**X. Boardmembers' Comments**

**XI. Public Comments**

**XII. Adjournment**

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accommodations please contact Mrs. Burgess at least **five** working days in advance, including documents in alternative formats.

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**Closed Session:** Following, or at any time during the meeting, the Conservancy may recess or adjourn to closed session to consider pending or potential litigation; property negotiations; or personnel-related matters. Authority: Government Code Section 11126(a), (c) (7), or (e).

**I. Call to Order**

Vice Chair McQuiston called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM

**II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers**

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul administered the oath of office to new Boardmembers Bill Nunes, Sierra County Supervisor, and Paolo Maffei Tuolumne County Supervisor.

**III. Roll Call**

**Present:** John Brissenden, Todd Ferrara, Brian Dahle, David Graber, Nancy Haug (alternate for Kathy Hardy), Bob Johnston, Bob Kirkwood, B.J. Kirwan, Jon McQuiston, Bill Nunes Mike Chapel, and Paolo Maffei.

**Absent:** Hal Stocker, Don Jardine and Tom Sheehy.

**IV. Approval of December 3, 2009 Meeting Minutes**

There were no changes to the meeting minutes.

**Action: Boardmember Dahle moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded a motion to approve the December 3 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.**

**V. Public Comments**

There were no public comments at this time.

**VI. Chairman's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

*A. Welcome new Boardmembers*

Vice Chair McQuiston welcomed the new Boardmembers.

*B. Discuss Board Chair status (This item was tabled until after item X)*

*C. Board meeting and field trip format discussion*

SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham pointed out that during the last two meetings the traditional format of having the field tour the day before the Board meeting was reversed. He said staff would appreciate any comments on the change. After some board discussion it was agreed that the field tours were a valuable experience for the board members to learn more about the area they are visiting by conferring with staff and local participants. The consensus of the board was that the field tour come the day before the board meeting, but exceptions could be made if need be.

**VII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

*A. Budget and Staffing*

Branham said that the SNC is on track to reduce its salary and wage budget by 5 percent for Fiscal Year 2009-10 as directed by the Governor. Staff continues to be on furlough the first three Fridays of each month through the end of June. Aside from this, the Governor's Budget is essentially the same for SNC's base operating funds for the coming fiscal year.

*B. Grants Update*

SNC Program Manager Kerri Timmer gave a brief background on the status of the grant program and the state's bond freeze. All previously approved projects are now fully funded. With no "new" money in sight, the Board acted in December 2009 to "conditionally" authorize 14 competitive projects from FY 08-09 – for a total of \$10.4 million. The Board's conditional authorization of projects allows them to be eligible for private placement bond sales, or reimbursement with future bond money, if the grantee can conduct project work now with other funds.

Responding to a question from Boardmember Graber, Timmer explained that a private placement bond sale would use Proposition 84 funds, but that instead of an open market sale, the sale would be negotiated directly between a single investor and the State Treasurer's Office (STO). In so doing, the investor has the ability to specify which projects would get funded by the funds generated from the sale.

In addition to information submitted in the staff report, Timmer reported that the STO has scheduled a regular General Obligation (GO) Bond sale for March 11, for up to \$2 billion, but it isn't known if any of the funds generated from the sale will be allocated to the SNC until after the sale.

Timmer also indicated that STO agreed to consider private placement bond sales for projects that have been conditionally authorized but that aren't going to receive funding any time soon from the regular GO bond sales. Timmer noted that there is hope that either the March bond sale or a successful private placement sale can generate the funds needed to fully fund the 14 conditionally authorized projects to allow good work to continue in the Sierra.

In response to a question from Boardmember Nunes, Timmer stated that we don't know with any certainty whether the March bond sale or a private placement sale will generate funds for the 14 projects, but that the SNC will notify the Board and stakeholders when information becomes available.

Timmer noted that since the last Board meeting in December, the SNC has paid another 87 invoices totaling almost \$1 million. This brings the total so far to 358 invoices for \$6.6 million "out the door." Timmer reported that 18 projects have been completed since the freeze lifted.

Timmer also reported that staff is working with individual organizations and funding sources to try to attract additional non-State funding to the Region.

In response to a question from Boardmember Kirkwood, Timmer stated that approximately \$22 million in Proposition 84 funds remain available for future grant awards once SNC gets the green light and the awarding of these dollars would likely be spread out over two years.

C. *North Subregion Report*

Branham announced that the Subregional Report submitted to the Board is a new regular feature of the Executive Officer's report, where the Area Manager for that meeting site will provide an overview of the Subregion.

Mt. Lassen Area Manager Bob Kingman reported the North Subregion, which includes parts of Shasta and Modoc counties, and all of Lassen County, was awarded 22 grants, approaching \$3 million, noting that the North Subregion has done relatively well in the grants program. Projects include three recreation and cultural resource revitalization projects. He stated that these projects contribute to preserving historic and natural resources, and help educational, interpretative and tourism-related opportunities in the Subregion. Kingman reminded the Board that one of the earliest projects the SNC participated in was the Modoc Line, an acquisition project in partnership with the Lassen and Modoc counties, Lassen Land and Trails trust and the Wildlife Conservation Board to acquire an 86-mile abandoned rail line in Lassen and Modoc counties. He said the SNC is looking forward to future improvements on the line to provide an attraction to these areas.

Kingman informed the Board that the SNC has worked on five other acquisitions to local land trusts or local resource conservations districts, primarily to acquire conservation easements and help keep local working landscapes in operation and viable. He pointed out that while there are no new grants being awarded currently, work continues on these existing projects.

A high priority in this Subregion, Kingman said, is the issue of fuels and vegetation management projects, as they have broad benefits including water quality, water supply, wildlife conservation, and fire safety. The SNC has also helped to fund eight riparian restoration projects.

Kingman added that five organizations in the North Subregion participated in the Great Sierra River Cleanup, including the Modoc River Center, Shasta Land Trust, Western Shasta Resource Conservation District, Shasta Roots and Shoots, and the Tehama County Resource Conservation District all participated in the event, as did Assemblyman Jim Nielsen.

D. *Friends of the Sierra*

Branham reported the creation of the "Friends of the Sierra" account, housed with the non-profit Resources Legacy Fund. The intent is to keep it a fairly modest fund, so as not to compete with partner organizations in the Sierra. The account is only used for those activities where the use of state funds is not appropriate.

*E. Stewardship Council Update*

Branham updated the Board on the possible third-party role that the SNC might play with the Pacific Forest & Watersheds Lands Stewardship Council (Council) in land transfer agreements for PG&E property in the Sierra Nevada Region. Issues persist relative to enforcement of easement disputes, Branham said, but added he feels the conversations should continue, and suggested using the Council's first project in Tuolumne County (Kennedy Meadows planning unit) as a discussion piece to further define the role.

Branham asked Boardmembers Brissenden and McQuiston, who were appointed by the Board to work with the SNC and the Council at the last Board meeting, to comment.

Brissenden and McQuiston said they would be interested in seeing SNC go forward with the draft easement language that was presented to the Board on a trial basis. Brissenden asked Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul for her thoughts on SNC's role.

Sproul said she had some concerns over liability and the responsibilities the SNC would be stepping into. She added she expects to be working with SNC staff on this issue to clarify.

Boardmember Kirkwood said there were two areas of concern with the draft easement language: The first was the SNC trying to compel the holder of the easement to enforce the easement, and the second is the lack of discussion about compensation to the SNC for both its initial and ongoing role.

Branham responded by saying he has made it clear in conversations with the Council that a "passive enforcer" role was problematic for the SNC and that any role for the SNC must come with full and complete compensation.

Boardmember Maffei echoed the concerns about liability issues and said that was why the local land trust opted out of the third party role in the Council's Kennedy Meadows planning unit project in Tuolumne County. He added the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors is supportive of the overall project.

Boardmember McQuiston said he feels the SNC is the logical organization if the compensation and enforcement issues can be worked out. He added he likes

the approach of using the Kennedy Meadows project as a way to evaluate what, if any, role the SNC can play.

**Public Comment:**

Allene Zanger, Executive Director of Pacific Forest & Watersheds Lands Stewardship Council explained that her board acts by consensus and will examine each project on its merits. She feels that by moving forward with the Kennedy Meadows planning unit, in the context of a recommended transactions, is a good idea. She added that she feels the SNC staff has been very diligent in looking at this issue and that she thinks the SNC is the right agency to take on this role.

McQuiston asked Sproul to create a “primer 101” on what the roles and responsibilities of a third party beneficiary arrangement would be for each party involved. Sproul responded that she would be happy to do so.

Branham thanked SNC staffer Linda Hansen for her work on this issue, and said the SNC would be working with the Council and will report back to the Board at the next meeting in June.

*F. License Plate Update*

Branham reported very little success to date in bringing in pledges to sign up for SNC license plates, as a means of diversifying its funding base. Despite the good efforts of SNC Manager Bob Kingman and others, Branham said, Board direction is needed as to whether or not the campaign should continue.

Kingman said he is having discussions with the California Ski Industry to add incentives.

Boardmember Brissenden said that a combination of paid signature gatherers and incentives is needed to make the effort successful.

**Public Comment:**

Elizabeth “Izzy” Martin, CEO of The Sierra Fund, said she feels it is vital to the Region that the SNC has its own funding source. Martin said the Sierra Nevada Alliance and The Sierra Fund had articulated an approach that there should be a paid solicitation strategy. Martin added that the economy has hurt many non-profits in the Sierra and that if this is to move forward, it needs to be the top priority of the SNC. Martin urged the Board to support The Sierra Fund staff to go forward with a paid application solicitation campaign.

Branham said that a paid solicitation strategy is a very different process than collecting signatures for an initiative, versus collecting personal financial information for a license plate fund-raising drive. With an incentive package in

place and a good list of interested buyers, Branham said he felt it could be successful, however, the response from the names on The Sierra Fund's list of interested purchasers turned out to be "dismal."

Boardmember Kirkwood said this is the first time he has heard of paid solicitations and feels it's a very difficult sell, especially with the mandated small logo design. He pointed out that the Bay Area plate—even with the Golden Gate Bridge on it—has not been successful, and so he is not enthusiastic about going forward at this time. Kirkwood would rather see the effort regroup at a later date and start it when the timing is better.

Boardmember Johnston said that given other organizations' difficulties selling their license plates, that he did not believe the Sierra plate would be successful at this time.

After further discussion, Chairman McQuiston noted the consensus of the Board was to suspend the current license plate campaign and work with The Sierra Fund to refund the money to the paid registrants, while keeping open the option of bringing in the ski industry (and possibly others) to see what incentives can be developed for a new initiative at some future date.

G. *Sierra Day in the Capitol April 14th.*

Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan reported on the organizational efforts to date for the Sierra Day in the Capitol, April 14. Keegan said this has been an annual event for many years, since before the SNC was created.

Keegan thanked The Sierra Fund and Sierra Nevada Alliance for organizing the event for many years in the past and for continuing to be involved. During recent years, the event has evolved away from lobbying on pending bills and budgets, and has instead become more focused on educating legislators about the Sierra and the importance of the Region to the state.

The SNC now plays a bigger role with greater staff participation, according to Keegan, who said a broader array of organizations are now involved as sponsors. These include the following: The Sierra Fund, Sierra Nevada Alliance, Sierra Business Council, Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council, California Cattlemen's Association, California Forestry Association, Trust for Public Land, Northern Sierra Partnership, Bear-Yuba Partnership, and (pending) the Regional Council of Rural Counties, with additional supporters are being sought.

Keegan said that in addition to lending their support to the event, some of these groups will be sending representatives who will be part of teams that spend most of the day in meetings with legislators and their staff.

In addition to meetings with individual legislators and staff, Keegan said the SNC is creating a display of photos and messages covering the 40-foot long wall outside the Governor's office, using large, original photos by some of the very talented photographers in the Region.

An evening reception will be held at the Stanford Mansion near the Capitol. The Sierra Day in Capitol Reception will be followed by the Sierra Business Council's annual Vision 2020 Awards event.

Boardmembers suggested including the California Ski Association, the Sierra Club and Cal Trout.

Boardmember Maffei asked what the message was that was being conveyed to the members. Keegan responded that the message was about the importance of the Sierra, including the fact that it is the source of most of California's water. She added that the SNC will have an exhibit across the hall from the Governor's Office, with a message about Sierra water.

**Public Comment:**

Izzy Martin, CEO of The Sierra Fund, echoed Keegan's remarks about the importance of connecting with the members, pointing out that as the recent water bond initiative was being developed in the Legislature, the SNC was not initially included for funding.

*H. Sierra Nevada Geotourism*

Nicole DeJonghe, with the Sierra Business Council (SBC), announced an important milestone in the Sierra Nevada Geotourism Project with the Yosemite Gateway portion of the Web site has now gone live. DeJonghe gave an overview of the nomination process, where 900 nominations submitted were submitted by 749 individuals via online registry. After a vigorous review process by the SBC and National Geographic, more than 300 sites were posted and more are being added all the time. The Web site address is: [www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org](http://www.SierraNevadaGeotourism.org)

**VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul reported that adoption of the SNC's Conflict of Interest (COI) regulations has been delayed, because the Fair Political Practices Commission has developed new language that they want incorporated into the COI regulations of all State conservancies. Sproul said she believes the package will be ready for Boardmembers at the June meeting.

**IX. Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative (ACTION) [3/3 PowerPoint Presentation](#)**

Branham mentioned that the Board had in its packet the final draft of the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative and resolution, adding that the SNC has been working with a broad array of stakeholder groups and has recently received more input.

The main concept behind the initiative is how do to make Sierra Nevada forests ecologically healthy, protecting habitat, keeping carbon stored, producing the clean water and air that comes from these forests, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire, and to do all this in a way that creates sustainable economical activity. Branham said that following the SNC's Symposium, "Connecting the Dots," on the subject, there has been a lot of interest among partner groups and others. The intent is not to dictate to the interested parties, but to create a process that will assist with appropriate actions throughout the Sierra, community by community, watershed by watershed, and to assist in identifying funding opportunities.

Branham said the SNC wished to propose an alternative to the proposal in the Board packet, but first asked Mt. Whitney Area Manager Kim Carr to give an overview of SNC activities in that Area, where there has been more "traction" on some of the issues contained in the Initiative.

Carr said some of the barriers to solutions have historically been disagreement between the groups involved over exactly what is best for the Sierra forests. One positive aspect of the downturn in the economy has been that these groups are beginning to come together to discuss how the forest can be thinned to achieve fuels management, create energy from biomass, protect historic and archeological sites, and assist in supporting the local economy. She outlined some of the efforts currently underway in the Mt. Whitney area where such projects are in development.

Carr said the SNC's role over the past year in working with groups has been to convene, facilitate, and mediate, including the Symposium held last year. Carr informed the Board of efforts in assist in funding and learning from other areas where similar efforts have been undertaken. Carr said the SNC is tracking policy that impacts community forestry and monitoring the research and science to be able to track the best management practices. Branham added that while there is broad consensus, that not everybody will be comfortable with all aspects of the initiative.

Boardmember Dahle said biomass plants cannot get enough fuel out of the forests fast enough. He added that there needs to be an examination of the pace and scale at which the forest is actually growing right now, and said that the ability to thin the forest using mechanical means, is a real problem. He said one of his fellow Lassen County Supervisors asked him to communicate that there needs to be a "ramping up" of the forest's thinning. Dahle also said that the private business side of the equation requires a consistent supply of fuel and the market rates for selling the products.

Boardmember Chapel said the US Forest Service is very much in support of the SNC's efforts and feels there is a good working relationship already in place. Chapel

said that while many agree that there should be an increase in biomass removal, that some groups are not in favor of increasing the pace and scale of biomass removal on public lands.

Boardmember Maffei said he is very impressed with the initiative. He suggested that the SNC appeal to "higher authority" to fast track biomass co-generation plants. He also said an artificial market should be created by forcing the power distributors to purchase a certain percentage from these products and said that an effort must be made to "marginalize the extreme" points of view and move toward consensus.

Boardmember Kirkwood said the issues contained in the Initiative have gone "viral, in a positive way," pointing out that Dr. Roger Bales, UC Merced hydrologist, has stated that water quality and yield need to be taken seriously as a primary management aim for forests.

Boardmember Nunes said Sierra County Supervisors asked if the resolution could be held over until they would have a chance to comment.

Branham said the SNC is modifying its recommendation and will ask the Board to approve the resolution as a draft document, allowing the SNC to submit it for more public comment.

Nunes said the SNC should involve the Sustainable Forest Action Coalition, fire safe councils in the Sierra Nevada and the Quincy Library Group.

Boardmember Graber complimented the staff of "getting it right," saying he is enormously enthusiastic.

There was no formal action taken. The Board directed staff to continue work on the Initiative and incorporate the suggestions to reach out to more groups.

#### **X. Subregional Assessments (INFORMATIONAL)**

Branham discussed the key findings and recommendations, which were provided in the Boardmembers' packets, and pointed out the different challenges faced by different Subregions.

Area Managers Bob Kingman and Kim Carr each gave an overview of their Subregions.

Based on finding and conclusions of the Subregional Assessments, the following actions were proposed to the Board for consideration:

- Attract funding for all program areas and funds to support planning, capacity building and education.
- Work to ensure flexibility in future bond funds to meet the Region's needs.

- Broaden outreach efforts to valley-based organizations and develop better partnerships with local governments in counties that are not wholly included in the Region.
- Work to establish stronger relationships with private landowner groups and working landscape interests.
- Identify opportunities for communities and organizations to partner with organizations outside of the Region.
- Consider playing a stronger role in project development where local capacity is limited, including training and technical assistance.
- Consider opportunities to directly fund SNC projects to meet needs, in particular in areas with limited capacity (geographically and programmatically).
- Monitor and communicate more aggressively with policy makers to ensure the needs of the Region are understood and addressed in future legislation and state policy. (Example given, Sierra Day in the Capitol.)

Boardmember Kirkwood said he was pleased with the analysis. He asked Branham what was meant by the SNC directly funding projects. Branham said that the SNC is looking at models that other agencies are using in taking on projects where the SNC would be the lead in areas where capacity is lacking. This could include the use of bond or non-bond funding.

Boardmember Brissenden commented on the assessments and proposed a Board workshop in the near future to discuss progress to date and the upcoming review of the SNC Strategic Plan.

Boardmember Johnston asked the SNC to seek out foundation grants for capacity building. He suggested a map of the Sierra showing where the foundation grants have been implemented. Branham agreed, saying the SNC is increasing its efforts to reach out to foundations.

Boardmember McQuiston thanked Kingman and Carr for their work. The Board took no action, but the consensus was that the assessments were valuable and could inform future planning efforts.

#### VI. B Discussion of Board Chair

Vice Chair McQuiston informed the Board that Secretary Chrisman's departure from his position had created a vacancy in the Board Chair position. He indicated that nominations for a new Board Chair were in order.

**ACTION: Boardmember Brissenden moved and Boardmember Dahle seconded the motion to nominate Boardmember B. J. Kirwan as the new Chair of the Board. The motion passed unanimously. Board Chair Kirwan assumed the role of Chair at this time.**

## XI. Acknowledgement of Former Chair Mike Chrisman

Board Chair Kirwan asked Branham to say a few words in honor of Chrisman, who has stepped down as Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency and Chair of the SNC Governing Board.

Branham, on behalf of the SNC, thanked Chrisman for his support and service to the SNC and presented a short video highlighting his accomplishments as Chair of the Board.

Chrisman said that the SNC was constructed in a unique way, and acknowledged the camaraderie that has developed among the Boardmembers. He thanked the SNC for the nice tribute and thanked Branham for his leadership. The Board reviewed and adopted Resolution 2010-001 commending Chrisman for his leadership and role in the creation of the SNC.

**ACTION: Boardmember Brissenden moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded the motion to adopt Resolution 2010-001. The motion passed unanimously.**

Board Chair Kirwan thanked Chrisman for shepherding the Conservancy into being, and for creating an amazing outline and foundation for the organization. She pledged to continue to build on that fantastic start to the organization.

Boardmember Kirkwood said that the SNC would not have happened without Chrisman's leadership and that he had a positive impact on the Board during his service as Chairman.

Boardmember Dahle thanked Chrisman on behalf of all the County Supervisors for the voice that they've had on the Board and Boardmember Brissenden also expressed his appreciation to Chrisman.

Chrisman recalled the contributions of the late Dennis Machida, Executive Officer of the Tahoe Conservancy, saying his behind the scenes, focused leadership in the effort to create the SNC was very instrumental. He thanked the Board for their efforts and friendship and said he enjoyed making good public policy on behalf of the Sierra Nevada.

Boardmember Ferreira said he appreciated the opportunity to work directly for Chrisman at the Natural Resources Agency.

Boardmember Graber said he appreciated Chrisman's support in Tulare County for the Kings Canyon National Park and looks forward to continuing to work with Chrisman in his new role with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Boardmember Chapel said the US Forest Service was very pleased when Chrisman became Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency and thanked him for including the Forest Service on the SNC Board.

**XII. Boardmember Comments**

There were no comments from the Board.

**XIII. Public Comments** Frank Stewart, County Forester with the Quincy Library Group and member of the Board of Directors for the State Fire Safe Council. Stewart urged the Board to find a way to provide continued support of the county level Fire Safe Council coordinators throughout the Sierra as part of the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative.

**XIII. Adjournment**

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 5:11PM.

### **Budget**

The SNC is on track with the expenditure of its current year operating budget of roughly \$4.5 million. As shown in the table on the following page, the SNC had expended 76% of these funds at the end of the third quarter of the fiscal year. The majority of this funding (\$3.9M) comes from the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF), which provides for the SNC's base budget. A smaller portion (\$477,000) comes from Proposition 84—the *Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006*—to support administration of the SNC's grant program.

Funds appropriated in the current fiscal year to the SNC out of Proposition 84 for local assistance (grants) remain untouched and will not be expended in 2009-10. While the SNC received authorization to spend \$14 million in grant funds from recent bond sales, any of those monies expended in the current year will come from funds that were appropriated to the SNC in 2008-09, but were not spent in that year. Similarly, the \$15.5 million appropriated to the SNC in the current year for local assistance, but which will not be spent, will be available to fund grants in future years (until June 2012).

The Governor's proposed budget for 2010-11, which generally continues the SNC's funding for operations, is moving through the State Legislature without incident. However, as budget projections are updated in May and as the budget process continues, the potential for cuts in the SNC's 2010-11 budget remain a possibility due to the State's ongoing fiscal woes.

### **Staffing**

The SNC filled our vacant Administrative Services Manager position, when Theresa Parsley agreed to return to the SNC in that role beginning May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Theresa had previously worked very ably to complete the Sierra Nevada Climate Action Plan and we are very happy to have her back with us in this new role.

2009-10 SNC Budgeted and Actual Expenditures  
As of March 31, 2010

<b>State Operations</b>				
<i>Personal Services</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
SALARIES AND WAGES	1,641,967	1,140,823	501,144	69%
SALARY SAVINGS (3%)	(39,729)		(39,961)	
STAFF BENEFITS	436,749	346,760	89,989	79%
<b>Personal Services, Totals</b> <i>As of 09/21/09 this figure reflects a reduction for 3 furlough days</i>	<b>2,038,988</b>	<b>1,487,582</b>	<b>551,406</b>	<b>73%</b>
<i>Operating Expenses &amp; Equipment</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Expended</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>% Spent</i>
GENERAL EXPENSE	271,771	140,624	131,147	52%
TRAVEL - IS	100,000	38,321	61,679	38%
TRAVEL - OS	2,612	0	2,612	0%
TRAINING	30,000	6,930	23,070	23%
FACILITIES	257,181	269,439	12,259	105%
UTILITIES	10,411	8,170	2,241	78%
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	67,265	63,416	3,849	94%
CONTRACTS- EXTERNAL	428,046	568,109	140,063	133%
CONTRACTS- INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT	875,270	657,335	217,935	75%
CONSOLIDATED DATA CENTER	-	0	0	0%
EQUIPMENT	-	0	0	0%
OTHER ITEMS OF EXPENSE	25,904	11,902	14,002	46%
PRO RATA (control agency costs)	182,562	136,922	45,641	75%
PROP 84 ADMIN SUPPORT	169,145	0	169,145	0%
<b>Operating Expenses &amp; Equipment, Totals</b>	<b>2,420,167</b>	<b>1,901,168</b>	<b>518,999</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>State Operations, Totals</b>	<b>4,459,155</b>	<b>3,388,750</b>	<b>1,070,405</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>Local Assistance, Totals</b>	<b>15,448,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15,448,000</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>SNC EXPENDITURES, TOTALS</b>	<b>19,907,155</b>	<b>3,388,750</b>	<b>16,518,405</b>	<b>17%</b>

The written report for this agenda item will be available at the Board meeting on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. It will contain information from the workshop held on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Background**

In December 2008, the Department of Finance froze payments on all Proposition 84 grants previously authorized by the SNC and other agencies as a means of preserving operating capital in the face of the State's unprecedented fiscal crisis. Subsequently, the State Treasurer's Office conducted three bond sales (March, April and October 2009) that generated enough funding to allow the SNC to restart and fully fund all of our frozen projects.

Because at the time there was no expectation of new bond funding in the near future, the SNC Board confirmed at its December 2009 meeting that all remaining unevaluated applications from FY 2008-09 would sunset as of December 31, 2009. The only exception was the decision to conditionally authorize – subject to the availability of future bond funds – 14 high-ranked FY 2008-09 Competitive grant applications that had already been fully evaluated and met the Department of Finance criteria for such authorizations. Conditional authorization made those projects eligible for other funding tools that might allow them to begin work while waiting for new bond funds to become available.

In addition, the launch of a FY 2009-10 grant solicitation was delayed until such time as new funding was made available.

### **Current Status**

There is good news to report on the bond cash front. The State Treasurer's Office conducted two highly successful bond sales in March 2010. The first sold California General Obligation (G.O.) bonds, and the second sold federally subsidized Build America (BAB) bonds. The BAB funds are the highly restricted dollars that can only be used for on-the-ground capital expenditures and reimbursement of direct capital costs (for the SNC that means primarily acquisition and site improvement projects).

In April the Department of Finance confirmed that we would receive \$7,826,790 from the G.O. bond sale and \$6,764,427 from the BAB sale, for a total of \$14,591,217. This amount is sufficient to fully fund the \$10,344,700 in conditional authorizations the SNC Board made in December 2009, and it gives the SNC approximately \$4,246,517 for new projects.

In a second piece of great news, the Department of Finance issued Budget Letter 10-09 on April 27, 2010, indicating the intent to sell more bonds in the Fall to generate additional upfront funds for new projects. This would provide the SNC with enough

funding to launch a new grant solicitation sometime this summer using the Proposition 84 Grants Guidelines approved by this Board in September 2009.

Outside of the news about new funds, SNC Program staff continues to guide grantees through the close-out process for completed projects. Since the last Board meeting, another 10 projects have closed out, bringing the total number of completed SNC projects in the Region to 23.

The Grants Administration team continues to expedite processing of invoices on restarted projects. As of the writing of this report, the SNC has processed 421 requests for project payments totaling just over \$7 million. That represents approximately 100 new requests and close to \$1,000,000 in payments since the written report for the March Board meeting.

In addition, the Fund Development team continues to research and disseminate information about State, Federal and private funding sources that might be of interest to stakeholders in the Region. We recently heard from one satisfied customer who used information from our monthly *Current Funding Opportunities* updates to successfully apply for grants totaling \$317,000 from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the National Forest Foundation and Pacific Gas & Electric. The team is also actively seeking outside funding for SNC initiatives and is assisting collaborative groups, local government entities, NGOs and others with individual funding requests.

And finally, the SNC was notified in late April that it is next in the queue for a Department of Finance audit of its Proposition 84 grant program. The audit process began with a meeting on May 18 and is expected to continue for some months. Staff will report updates and results to the Board as they become available.

### **Next Steps**

As a result of this Board's approval of revised SNC Grant Guidelines, staff anticipates launching a new solicitation for applications sometime this summer, with Board review and authorization tentatively slated for March 2011. As previously identified, the intent would be to award up to \$10 million, subject to funds being available. As a reminder, the Guidelines include a distribution formula of 60% to be awarded on a Subregional basis (equally) and 40% to be awarded without regard to geographic location.

In anticipation of launching a new grant solicitation for 2010-11, staff is evaluating the format, content and mechanisms we use to inform Boardmembers about proposed grant projects and staff recommendations in an attempt to provide more useful materials for Board decision-making. We anticipate reviewing this process with recommendations for changes (if any) with the Board later this year.

**Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Board members are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments. The Chair may wish to name a two-member committee to work with staff on developing more effective decision-making tools for the Board's use in future grant project review and authorization.**

## **Background**

The East Subregion of the SNC includes Alpine, Mono, and a portion of Inyo counties. One SNC program staff member and a quarter time student assistant serve this Subregion from a satellite office in Bishop with additional support from Mt. Whitney Area staff in Mariposa and Auburn. Several significant projects in the East Subregion have greatly benefitted from SNC support and funding. To date this Subregion has received 21 grants for a total of almost \$1,750,000. Some of these projects are highlighted below.

This Subregion is primarily rural and the sparse population of just under 32,000 residents is spread over approximately 7,287 square miles within the SNC boundary. Ninety-six percent of the land in this Subregion is under public ownership and management by the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. Pine forests and alpine meadows surround 14 of the 15 highest peaks in the contiguous US, which stand as sentinels in the Eastern Sierra Subregion. The massive and steep granitic escarpment drops dramatically into the valley floor in Inyo County, which is covered in a high desert combination of sage-scrub and grasslands.

## **Current Status**

### **SNC Funded Projects**

The scarcity of privately owned land in this Subregion plays a prominent role in the sparse populations, limited growth projections, and lack of affordable housing that characterizes this portion of the SNC Region. The Eastern Sierra Land Tenure project was developed by BLM, Inyo and Mono counties and is being funded through SNC to research the feasibility of entering into land trades and exchanges, which could provide for better managed growth by locating developable parcels near or adjacent to existing communities.

The amount, beauty and accessibility of public land make the East Subregion highly dependent on tourism and governmental services to fuel much of its economy. The SNC has funded the Lower Owens River Recreational Use Plan for the newly re-watered 60 mile section of the Lower Owens River that will result in implementation projects which benefit a more sustainable regional economy while protecting the natural resources. In Mono County, the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District and the Inyo National Forest were awarded SNC grants to provide fuel treatments on extreme fire risk forested parcels within the Mammoth Lakes Basin to protect this highly valued tourist destination, critical wildlife habitat and vital watershed. A group has formed as a result of these projects to further explore the feasibility of biomass value added products and energy from future fuel treatment programs that restore forest health.

Water resource planning and management in this Subregion is complex somewhat due to the large size of the Subregion and long history of water conflicts. Several other projects funded by SNC address watershed related issues in the Subregion. Among them are the Alpine Watershed Group Water Monitoring Program which will monitor water quality and discharge in an area that encompasses the headwaters of three of the five major watersheds including the Carson, Mokelumne, and Stanislaus. The Inyo-Mono Integrated Regional Watershed Management Planning Project will provide a framework within which to address water issues such as water supply, water quality, habitat and environment, recreation, and land use by working collaboratively with over thirty stakeholders throughout the Subregion.

**Next Steps**

Staff will continue to interact with representatives and partners in the East Subregion to provide resources, services and expertise.

**Background**

On April 14th, fifty-four individuals from twenty-eight diverse organizations took part in the sixth annual Sierra Day in the Capitol—a day dedicated to raising awareness among State Legislators and their staff about the importance of the Sierra Nevada and the benefits the Region provides to the entire State of California. Sierra Day in the Capitol sponsors included:

- Bear-Yuba Partnership
- California Cattlemen's Association
- California Forestry Association
- California Rangeland Trust
- California Ski Industry Association
- California Trout
- Mountain Counties Water Resources Association
- Northern Sierra Partnership
- Pacific Forest Trust
- Planning and Conservation League
- Regional Council of Rural Counties
- Sierra Business Council
- Sierra-Cascade Land Trust Council
- Sierra Environmental Water Caucus
- Sierra Nevada Alliance
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Southern Sierra Partnership
- The Sierra Fund
- The Trust for Public Land

Sierra Day participants, including SNC Boardmember Paolo Maffei, convened in the Governor's Council Room and began the day by hearing from Assemblyman Jim Nielsen and Senator Fran Pavley regarding the issues they believe are important to the Region and the State. Rico Mastrodonato with the Trust for Public Land then provided participants with a primer on how to communicate effectively with Legislators and their staff.

In the afternoon, thirteen teams of enthusiastic Sierra Nevada supporters descended on legislative offices and delivered their message to over 150 individuals using maps, fact sheets, project profiles, and other information. To further support the message of the importance of the Sierra Nevada to California, the SNC unveiled a Sierra Nevada water display, which we hope will remain on display for several months. In addition, during the week leading up to the event and for the week after, the walls outside the Governor's Office were lined with large original photographs on loan from artists

throughout the Sierra, which depicted some of the many benefits the Region provides to the State.

### **Current Status**

This year's Sierra Day in the Capitol received very positive reviews from participants and also from some of the Legislators and staff we met with, who were impressed that such a diverse group of interests had come together to deliver a unified message about the importance of the Sierra Nevada.

News of the day was carried on local radio and in the *Capitol Alert*.

### **Next Steps**

We hope to get more groups and individuals to participate in next year's Sierra Day in the Capitol and to further build on the message that investment in the Sierra Nevada is needed to protect and enhance benefits that the Region provides to California.

### **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 on how to make next year's event an even greater success.**

## **Background**

In early 2009 the Conservancy (SNC) partnered with the Sierra Business Council (SBC) and the National Geographic Society to develop the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project. The MapGuide Project consists of an interactive Web site and several printed maps to highlight unique and authentic tourism destinations in the Sierra Nevada. The project supports the SNC's mandate to enhance tourism in the Sierra Nevada Region while also promoting the preservation of cultural and heritage resources.

The project has been divided into four phases covering the entire Sierra Nevada Region including three counties of western Nevada. Funding for the project has come from the SNC (\$50,000), SBC, the Morgan Family Foundation, El Dorado County, and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA). Total committed funding for the project to date is approximately \$395,000. Additional investments totaling approximately \$150,000 - 200,000 are needed to complete the project.

Phase one of the project (The Yosemite Gateways and Byways) has been completed and is live on the web at ([www.sierranevadageotourism.org](http://www.sierranevadageotourism.org)). The Web site received over 5,000 page views from 61 countries between March 15 and April 15, and a large amount of positive press has been generated for the effort throughout the state by major publications and broadcast organizations. Additional metrics will be gathered and reported on a regular basis for use by businesses and tourism professionals.

## **Current Status**

The US Forest Service (USFS) recently submitted a grant application to the FHWA Scenic Byways Program to translate the Yosemite Gateways/ Byways Phase into Spanish. Selections for the grants should be announced in November.

An active local geo-council has formed and is currently building momentum to implement a three-month focused nomination period for the Tahoe Emigrant Corridor Phase of the project which includes the counties of El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Washoe, Carson City, and Douglas. The focused nomination period will extend from early June through August.

## **Next Steps**

Phases 3 (northern Sierra and lower Cascades) and 4 (Sequoia/ Kings Canyon / Kern River Valley) will follow immediately after with plans to have all site nominations completed by June 2011 and the entire project live online by November 2011. The

possibilities for developing printed versions of each phase are still being negotiated, and would likely include several hundred thousand copies for distribution.

**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.**

### **Background**

Under the Political Reform Act, each California state agency is required to adopt a Conflict of Interest Code, which consists of the regulations that delineate the required disclosure of financial interests for each designated officer or employee of the agency. (See Government Code section 87302.) In 2006 the Board adopted the conflict of interest code for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, and it became effective after approval by the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) and the Office of Administrative Law, and submission to the Secretary of State. The Conservancy has grown since the initial code was adopted, and staff is proposing amendments to the Conservancy's conflict of interest code, (1) to be consistent with changes in staffing and reflecting titles used for staff positions, so that the code will be more understandable for the public; and (2) to reflect the Conservancy's grant issuing functions in disclosure categories. The FPPC provided guidance for conflict of interest codes for state conservancies, and that guidance is reflected in the proposed amendments.

### **Current Status**

Staff has prepared proposed amendments to the conflict of interest code. A notice of the proposed rulemaking action, an initial statement of reason, and the proposed amendments to the conflict of interest code of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy- have been filed with the Fair Political Practices Commission and the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), and are provided with this staff report. This Board meeting provides an opportunity for public comment on the proposed amendments, and the public comment period will run until June 10, 2010.

### **Next Steps**

After the close of the comment period, the proposed regulation language will be ready for approval by the Conservancy, followed by submission to the FPPC and the OAL. If there are few or no comments received, only minor amendments may be needed, if any. In that case, the Board may delegate authority to the Executive Officer to make minor changes and to complete the process. The code amendments could be completed and become effective prior to the next Board meeting.

### **Recommendation**

**Staff recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Public Resources Code section 33300 et seq., including section 33325:**

**“The Sierra Nevada Conservancy has reviewed and considered the proposed amendments to its conflict of interest code, and hereby delegates authority to the Executive Officer and authorizes the Executive Officer to approve and adopt amendments to the conflict of interest code for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in substantially the form proposed, including any necessary minor technical changes, and directs the Executive Officer to take the necessary actions to complete the rulemaking process, including filing documents as necessary with**

the Fair Political Practices Commission and the Office of Administrative Law. Should substantive changes to the proposed amendments be recommended, the Executive Officer is directed to present the revised package to the Board for approval.”

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE FOR THE  
SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY**

Title 14 California Code of Regulations

Section 25231. Conflict of Interest Code of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

(a) The Political Reform Act (Government Code Section 81000, et seq.) requires state and local government agencies to adopt and promulgate conflict of interest codes. The Fair Political Practices Commission has adopted a regulation (2 Cal. Code of Regs. Sec. 18730) that contains the terms of a standard conflict of interest code, which can be incorporated by reference in an agency's code. After public notice and hearing, the standard code may be amended by the Fair Political Practices Commission to conform to amendments in the Political Reform Act. Therefore, the terms of 2 California Code of Regulations Section 18730 and any amendments to it duly adopted by the Fair Political Practices Commission are hereby incorporated by reference. This regulation and the attached Appendices designating positions and employees and establishing disclosure categories, shall constitute the conflict of interest code of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (Conservancy).

(b) Individuals holding designated positions shall file their statements with the Conservancy which will make the statements available for public inspection and reproduction. (Gov. Code Sec. 81008) Upon receipt of the statements for the Members of the Board, Alternates and the Executive Officer, the Conservancy shall make and retain copies and forward the original to the Fair Political Practices Commission. All other statements will be retained by the Conservancy.

Appendix A

<i>Designated Position</i>	<i>Disclosure Categories</i>
Boardmembers and Alternates	1, 2, 3, 4
Executive Officer	1, 2, 3, 4
Assistant Executive Officer (CEA)	1, 2, 3, 4
Staff Counsel	1, 2, 3, 4
Staff Services Manager II	1, 2, 3, 4
Tahoe Conservancy Program Manager	1, 2, 3, 4
Conservancy Project Development Manager	1, 2, 3, 4
Tahoe Conservancy Program Analyst II	1, 2, 3, 4
Conservancy Project Development Analyst II,	1, 2, 3, 4
Conservancy Project Development Specialist	1, 2, 3, 4
B	
Associate Governmental Program Analyst (Procurement)	1, 2, 3, 4
Associate Governmental Program Analysis (Contracting)	1, 2, 3, 4
Consultants	*

\* The Executive Officer may determine in writing that a particular consultant, although a "designated position," is hired to perform a range of duties that are limited in scope and thus is not required to fully comply with the disclosure requirements described in this section. Such written determination shall include a description of the consultant's duties and, based on that description, a statement of the extent of disclosure requirements. The Executive Officer's determination is a public record and shall be retained for public inspection in the same manner and location as other statements filed in accordance with this conflict of interest code. (Gov. Code, Section 81008.)

**Appendix B**  
**Disclosure Categories**

Category 1

Individuals in this category must report all interests in real property located within or not more than two miles outside the boundaries of the region. The term region means the Sierra Nevada Region as described by Public Resources Code Section 333029(f).

Category 2

Individuals in this category must report all investments, and business positions in business entities, and sources of income, including gifts, loans and travel payments, from sources of the type which provide services, supplies, materials, goods or equipment of the type utilized by the Conservancy.

Category 3

Individuals in this category must report all investments, and business positions in business entities, and sources of income, including gifts, loans and travel payments, if the source is of the type to receive grants from the Conservancy.

Individuals in this category must also report all investments, and business positions in business entities, and sources of income, including gifts, loans and travel payments, if the source is of the type to sell property to a Conservancy grant applicant.

Category 4

Individuals in this category must report all investments, and business positions in business entities, and sources of income, including gifts, loans and travel payments, from sources of the type which engage in the preparation of reports, surveys, evaluations or investigations of the type used by the Conservancy, including environmental documents such as environmental impact reports, real property appraisals, land surveys, environmental assessments, hazardous waste investigations, percolation evaluations, engineering reports, biological assessments, geologic or hydrologic evaluations, or evaluation of the physical condition of real property.

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 33300 and 33325(b), Public Resources Code;  
Sections 87300 and 87304 Government Code  
Reference: Section 87300 et seq., Government Code

## **Background**

Over the past year, SNC staff has had numerous discussions with a wide range of partners and stakeholders on how best to address issues related to forest health, wildfire and sustainable communities. It has been clear that the relationship between these issues presents a unique opportunity for the SNC to assist the Region in addressing these matters in an integrated manner, affecting a number of our program areas.

SNC staff has been actively supporting a number of efforts at the community level, including the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group and the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative (Mariposa and Madera counties). The groups involve diverse stakeholders with the common vision of creating communities that no longer live in fear of fire and instead participate in the management of forests to improve ecological health, reduce wildfire risk and create jobs and other economic benefits. Staff is also engaging groups in a number of other communities to assist in identifying opportunities and actions to address these issues.

At the same time, through interaction with the federal land management agencies, it has become apparent that there is interest in the SNC playing a role in advancing efforts to improve forest health and community vitality. The US Forest Service (USFS), Regional Forester Randy Moore recently released a memo to all Region 5 (includes California) employees stating the Region's "Leadership Intent." This direction calls for a focus on ecological restoration and according to Moore, "The goal is to pick up the pace and scale of our restoration work." The SNC appears to be well positioned to assist in ensuring success in the USFS's efforts to restore national forest health in the Sierra. At the March Board meeting the Board reviewed a draft description of a proposed initiative and resolution and directed staff to solicit public comment, make appropriate changes and bring the matter back to the Board at this meeting. In addition to ongoing conversations with a variety of stakeholders, during the month of April the SNC received 63 comments addressing the initiative and resolution.

## **Current Status**

Staff has revised the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) description (Attachment A) and the proposed resolution (Attachment B) in response to the public comments received (Attachment C).

Generally speaking, the vast majority of comments received were supportive of the basic intent of the Resolution, although most that communicated support also suggested changes to the language of the resolution.

For the most part, the comments fell into the following categories:

- Support for the Resolution with suggestions of no or minor changes.
- General support with suggested changes to the resolution.

- Acknowledgement of the general intent of the resolution and/or the current conditions, but did not offer specific comments relating to the resolution.
- Suggestions that primarily address the implementation of the Initiative.
- Opposition to the direction and objectives of the Initiative.

A number of key issues were raised in the public comments that have been addressed in the revised proposed resolution:

- The role of existing wood products infrastructure in achieving the objectives of the initiative;
- Clarifications that reinforce the focus on ecological and economic sustainability;
- Inclusion of local government in the process;
- The role of fire in the ecosystem, including the use of prescribed fire;
- The importance of the work conducted by Fire Safe Councils in the Sierra; and
- The importance of watershed restoration efforts, including activities that increase the natural storage of water.

### **Next Steps**

The Initiative is not intended to supplant or compete with other efforts, but is meant to identify and take action on: (1) opportunities for investment of public and private resources, (2) necessary policies to achieve desired outcomes and (3) identification of processes and actions consistent with the following linked objectives:

- Creating ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, thereby protecting and enhancing habitat and water quality and quantity while reducing the risk of large damaging fires; and
- Creating sustainable local economic activity in the region through increasing the sustainable production of renewable biomass energy and a variety of wood products.

The Initiative focuses on public lands; however it is clearly understood that activities on private lands will have an effect on the effort and must be considered. Given that more than two-thirds of Sierra forests are owned by the public and managed by the federal government, substantial federal involvement and investment is needed and appropriate. At the same time, coordination among the various State of California agencies with an interest in the Sierra is essential to ensure a strategic approach. Local governments can contribute through local leadership, economic development efforts, supportive policies and land use planning efforts that are consistent with the Initiative objectives. Many non-governmental organizations and private landowners are currently contributing positively to these objectives and are well positioned to provide greater assistance. In order to successfully implement this initiative, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy will provide leadership, coordination, monitoring and reporting on its success. The SNC is prepared to provide convening, facilitation, information gathering and analysis, grant writing and technical assistance as well.

A SNFCI Coordinating Council will be created consisting of federal and state agencies, local governments, tribal entities, environmental/conservation organizations, Fire Safe and watershed organizations and private sector representatives who have signed onto the Resolution. SNC staff is proposing to work with a committee of the Board and key stakeholders to determine the appropriate size and representation for the Council. The Council will provide overall guidance for the implementation of the Initiative. The first charge of the Council will be the creation of a Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Implementation Plan for the purpose of identifying actions necessary for successful implementation of the Initiative. The Plan will establish measurable outcomes for the Initiative and identify a process for monitoring success. By identifying needs and opportunities, the Plan will assist in strategic investment in the Region. In addition, the Council will apply their expertise to provide assistance with policy analysis, legislation review, current research and science and technical issues such as emerging technologies.

At the same time, SNC staff will continue to work with local communities to assist in efforts to address these issues. These efforts will continue to inform us as to the needs and opportunities that exist throughout the Sierra Nevada. The overall Initiative effort is intended to provide support for these local efforts and in no way intended to prescribe or dictate to these efforts.

### **Recommendation**

**Staff recommends that the Board approve the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Resolution and direct staff to take the necessary steps for the successful implementation of it. Staff further recommends that the Chair consider appointing a two member Board committee as liaisons to the effort.**

*Attachment A*

*– BOARD REVIEW DRAFT –  
May 19, 2010*

**Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative**

*An effort to create healthy forests, watersheds and communities*

**Overview:** The **Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative** (SNFCI) is a coordinated effort among federal and state agencies, local governments, tribal entities, environmental/conservation organizations and the private sector, to improve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. The Initiative is not intended to supplant or compete with other efforts, but is meant to identify and act upon: (1) opportunities for investment of public and private resources, (2) necessary policies to achieve desired outcomes and (3) processes and actions consistent with the following linked objectives:

- Creating ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, thereby protecting and enhancing habitat and water quality and quantity while reducing the risk of large damaging fires;
- Creating sustainable local economic activity in the Region through increasing the sustainable production of renewable biomass energy, and a variety of wood products.

Successfully achieving these objectives will result in a number of key outcomes for the region and state:

- Protecting water quality and increasing natural water storage in the Sierra, the origin of 65 percent of the state's developed water supply;
- Protecting and enhancing key habitats for a variety of threatened and endangered species;
- Preserving and creating long-term, family wage jobs in Sierra communities;
- Reducing air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions from large damaging fires; and
- Maximizing the sequestration of carbon in Sierra Forests.

The SNFCI will also promote, support and assist local efforts aimed at meeting the intent of the Initiative. Specific land management prescriptions, economic development opportunities and other activities are best determined through a collaborative process that develops outcomes consistent with the needs of the local forests and communities. The SNC will work to assist in local efforts designed to address these issues.

**Background:**

The Sierra Nevada Region is critical to the well-being of California and its residents. The Region is the origin of approximately 65 percent of the state's developed water supply, serving municipal, agricultural and industrial needs throughout the state. Nearly

*Attachment A*

*– BOARD REVIEW DRAFT –  
May 19, 2010*

three-quarters of all the hydropower produced in California comes from the Sierra high-elevation hydropower system, generating roughly 12 percent of all energy produced in the state. The Region also produces from up to one-half of the state's annual timber supply. The Sierra Nevada serves as one of the state's leading areas to recreate and visit, with more than 50 million recreation visit days each year.

Nonetheless, the potential for even greater contributions exists. Sierra forests store large amounts of carbon, with these forests providing more carbon sequestration acre for acre than the Amazon rainforests. Through sustainable management, large damaging wildfire can be reduced and carbon sequestration can be increased and protected into the future. Without the appropriate management this carbon "plus" could literally go up in smoke, turning the benefit into a huge liability.

California policy currently calls for 33 percent of its energy to be produced from renewable sources by 2020, with 20 percent of all renewable energy to be generated from biomass resources by 2010. Energy produced from biomass currently provides only 3 percent of the overall in-state energy produced. Estimates indicate that the greatest abundance of potential biomass feedstock in California, up to 41percent, could come from forestry biomass. Clearly the opportunity for a significant contribution of renewable biomass energy - and the creation of jobs for local citizens - exists in the Region, consistent with sustainable forest management.

At the same time, maintaining existing facilities that process traditional "dimensional" wood products is likewise critical to the long-term sustainability of the Region. Opportunities also exist for production of a variety of wood products from the biomass removed from the forests, including wood pellets (used for heating), post/poles and other specialty wood products. Developing appropriately scaled infrastructure to process the materials removed to restore forest health is essential for the Region to achieve a sustainable economy in forest communities.

As the climate changes, it will become essential that we act to ensure that Sierra watersheds continue to serve as the state's primary source of clean water. The opportunity exists for restoration and management efforts that will assist water managers in meeting ongoing needs. This includes increasing "natural storage" (through meadow restoration as an example), implementing land management that results in maintaining snowpack into the spring and protecting important natural areas from conversion to other uses.

In order to protect existing resources, address potential threats and take advantage of the additional contributions the Sierra makes to the State's energy production and emission reduction goals, a coordinated initiative is needed to focus attention on this region, increase investment, guide policy and measure success. The SNFCI provides

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the opportunity for a successful effort.

**The Initiative**

By addressing the objectives described above in a coordinated and integrated approach, long-term environmental, economic and social well-being can be improved in the Sierra. Clearly this effort will require the support of federal and state agencies, local governments, and tribal entities, representatives from the environmental /conservation community, representatives of Fire Safe and watershed organizations and the private sector. Finding areas of agreement on which to focus actions will provide a foundation for ongoing efforts.

The Initiative will have two interrelated aspects: 1) a Region-wide focus that addresses, policy issues, investment needs and relevant science and research, and 2) local collaborative efforts that address actions needed to achieve the desired outcomes at a more local level.

The Initiative focuses on public lands; however it is clearly understood that activities on private lands will have an effect on the effort and must be considered. Given that the federal government is responsible for the management of approximately two-thirds of the Sierra Nevada landscape, substantial federal involvement and investment is needed and appropriate. At the same time, coordination among the various State of California agencies and tribal entities with an interest in the Sierra is essential. Local governments can contribute through local leadership and advocacy, supportive policies and land use planning efforts that are consistent with the Initiative objectives. Many non-governmental organizations and private landowners are currently contributing positively to these objectives and are well-positioned to provide greater assistance.

A number of activities are occurring in the Sierra Nevada Region that are consistent with the intent of this Initiative. The SNC hopes to support and strengthen those efforts including: (1) Fire Safe and related efforts designed to protect communities, watersheds and forests; (2) watershed restoration efforts aimed at improving riparian conditions, restoring habitat and increasing natural storage of water and, (3) ecological restoration of forests.

In order to successfully implement this initiative, the SNC will provide leadership, coordination, monitoring and reporting on its success. A SNFCI resolution has been developed for the purpose of allowing governmental entities, businesses and organizations that share these strategic objectives to participate. A SNFCI Coordinating Council will be created consisting of federal and state agencies, local governments, tribal entities, representatives from the environmental/conservation community and the private sector. The first charge of the Council will be the creation of an implementation

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*– BOARD REVIEW DRAFT –  
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plan for the purpose of guiding and monitoring progress over time. The Plan will establish measurable outcomes for the Initiative and identify a process for monitoring success. By identifying needs and opportunities, the Plan will assist in strategic investment in the Region.

**Summary**

***The successful implementation of the Initiative will attract additional investment to the Sierra Nevada region, resulting in: protection of the state's primary watershed and its many ecological benefits; creation of thousands of sustainable new jobs and more diversified local economies; and a contribution to the state's efforts to increase production of renewable energy.***

*--BOARD REVIEW DRAFT --*

*May 19, 2010*

## **The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Resolution**

### **Overview**

Today, many Sierra Nevada communities face a number of important challenges, including ecologically unhealthy forests, the threat of large damaging fire and the need for sustainable local economies. Understanding the relationship between these issues, and acting to address them, holds the potential for an important and perhaps unprecedented opportunity. Through sound stewardship of our Sierra forests, a healthy ecological system can be restored and remain intact with the involvement of members of the Sierra communities. These stewardship activities can provide jobs and revenue to support diverse and robust communities, building upon the existing infrastructure and creating new opportunities.

The following resolution represents a commitment on the part of signatories to work together to identify, initiate and support actions necessary to achieve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada region. The Initiative will primarily focus on issues relating to public lands in the region, while recognizing the importance of private lands in achieving the overall objectives.

### **Resolution**

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada Region is California's principal watershed and the origin of 65% of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; is home to two-thirds of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humans;

Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada forestlands are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, including public lands managed by the federal government;

Whereas, while fire is an important part of the ecosystem and can have a positive ecological impact, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada can result in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, adverse human health impacts from poor air quality, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in degraded water and air quality, and altered wildlife habitat;

Whereas, many Sierra Nevada forests are showing signs of declining biodiversity;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in reduced amounts of carbon stored in the forests and cause significant emissions of greenhouse gases;

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Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate combined with the unhealthy condition of portions of the forest will likely result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future;

Whereas, land management agencies, Fire Safe Councils and other entities are engaged in ongoing efforts to reduce the risk of large damaging fires with many efforts focused on the urban wildland interface, the need for additional investment for these types of activity is evident;

Whereas, many Sierra communities continue to struggle with economic vitality and sustainability even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierra counties significantly higher than the national and state's average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products has been in decline in recent decades signaling a need to diversify local economies by protecting existing infrastructure while promoting new economic opportunities at the appropriate scale;

Whereas the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in improved ecological health of forests, including sufficient habitat conditions, increased carbon storage, continued recreational use and high water quality;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy in a sustainable manner, as well as a variety of wood products, including dimensional lumber and "value added" products, creating an opportunity for locally based family wage jobs:

Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with state and federal agencies, local and tribal governments, the environmental/conservation community and, the private sector, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada region by:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon in plants and soil;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and

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indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, "value added" wood products, dimensional wood products, other commercial wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in protection and restoration of plant and wildlife habitat through increased resiliency, diversity and species composition post treatment;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving these objectives;
- Identifying, supporting and applying current research and science to assist in achieving these objectives.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

Signed,

~~The Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Resolution Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative~~

~~*An effort to create healthy forests, watersheds and communities*~~

Overview

Today, many Sierra Nevada communities face a number of important challenges, including ecologically unhealthy forests, ~~the, the~~ threat of large damaging catastrophic fire and the need for sustainable local ~~economies. Understanding economies.~~ Understanding the relationship between these issues, and acting to address them, holds the potential for an important and perhaps unprecedented opportunity. Through sound stewardship of our the Sierra forests resources, a healthy ecological system can be restored and remain intact withbythe involvement of members of the Sierra communities. These stewardship activities can provide jobs and revenue to support diverse and robust communities, building upon the existing infrastructure and creating new opportunities.

The following resolution represents a commitment on the part of signatories to work together to identify, initiate and support actions necessary to achieve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada region. The Initiative will primarily focus on issues relating to public lands in the region, while recognizing the importance of private lands in achieving the overall objectives.

~~The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution~~

Resolution

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada region is California's principal watershed and the origin of 65% of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; is home to two-thirds<sup>2/3</sup> of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humans;

Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada forestlands are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, including public lands managed by the federal government;

Whereas, while fire is an important part of the ecosystem and can have a positive ecological impact, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada can results in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, adverse human health impacts fromsuch as poor air quality, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts;

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Whereas, large damaging fires ~~-results~~ in degraded water and air quality, ~~adverse human health impacts,~~ and ~~altered the loss of~~ wildlife habitat;

Whereas, ~~many Sierra Nevada forests are showing signs of declining biodiversity~~~~declining biodiversity with fewer pockets of old growth remaining, fewer snags and downed logs and declining number of hardwoods is also a symptom of declining forest health;~~

Whereas, large damaging ~~fires~~~~results~~~~fires result~~ in ~~reduced amounts of the loss of~~ carbon stored in the forests and causes significant emissions of greenhouse gases; ~~therefore adversely affecting efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change;~~

Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate combined with the unhealthy condition of ~~a significant~~ portions of the forest will ~~likely~~ result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future, ~~further exacerbating these impacts;~~

~~Whereas, land management agencies, Fire Safe Councils and other entities are engaged in ongoing efforts to reduce the risk of large damaging fires with many efforts focused on the urban wildland interface, the need for additional investment for these types of activity is evident;~~

Whereas, ~~many Sierra communities continue to struggle with~~ economic ~~vitality and sustainability~~~~conditions in the Sierra continue to show negative trends,~~ even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierra counties ~~that are~~ significantly higher than the national and state's average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products ~~and ranching has been in decline in recent decades signaling a need to~~ ~~are expected to continue to decline,~~ ~~underscoring the need to~~ diversify local economies ~~by protecting existing infrastructure while promoting new economic opportunities at the appropriate scale while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;~~

Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in improved ecological health of forests, including ~~sufficient improved~~ habitat conditions, ~~increased carbon storage,~~ ~~continued recreational use~~ and ~~high improved~~ water quality;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy ~~in a sustainable manner,~~ as well as a variety of wood products, including ~~dimensional lumber and~~ "value added" products, creating an opportunity for locally based ~~family wage jobs~~~~sustainable economic activity:~~

Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with ~~state and federal agencies, local and tribal governments, the environmental/conservation community and, the private sector~~ ~~a wide range of~~

~~--BOARD REVIEW DRAFT--~~  
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~~governmental and non-governmental entities~~, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada region by:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon in plants and soil;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, “value added” wood products, dimensional wood products, other commercial wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in protection and restoration of plant and wildlife habitat ~~throughstemming from~~ increased resiliency, diversity and species composition post treatment;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving these objectives;
- Identifying, supporting and applying current research and science to assist in achieving these objectives.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

Signed,

**Katherine Evatt, Foothill Conservancy –**

One thing bothers me right away - the name. It implies something *much* broader. As you know, there is so much more to Sierra sustainability than forests and forest-related jobs, and it's important for people who live and work in the Sierra to acknowledge that. I'm also bothered by the term "large, damaging fires" because I don't know what that means.

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**Betony Jones, Fourth Sector Strategies–**

Looks great-- You can add me.

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**Addie Jacobson, Ebbett's Pass Forest Watch-**

I have been thinking about the proposed SNC resolution that was sent around. First, I would like to say that I believe that the issues raised by Katherine in another email are worthy of consideration and discussion. Secondly, I have been pondering the title of the Resolution. "Sustainable" and "Sustainability" have become ubiquitous terms that everyone seems to see as positive attributes, but there is seldom any definition of what the party using the term means by it. Without doing so, a lurking potential for future conflict or mischief from differing expectations and definitions exists. Here is an edited segment of comments I have submitted on this point previously that elaborates further on this point: The title of this section, "Sustainable Forests," lends itself to ambiguity and misinterpretation. There is disagreement among significant forestry sector stakeholders over the term "sustainable." Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), which has obtained approvals to clearcut over a quarter million acres of the Sierra Nevada since 1996, says that the wholesale removal of a diverse forest and its replacement with limited-species tree plantations is "sustainable" because marketable wood fiber will eventually be grown on those denuded sites for subsequent re-harvest. This is a usage of the term "sustainable" equated to that of "sustained yield." However, this is a limited definition of sustainability.

*The concept of sustainable forest management is related to but different in significant ways from an earlier concept of sustained yield—the amount of wood that a forest can produce on a continual basis.... The concept of sustainable forest management, however, includes managing the forest for more than outputs; it focuses on maintaining processes and seeking to sustain communities, economies, and all the elements of a forest (Floyd 2002). [See Floyd (2002) for a fuller description of the evolution of concepts of forest sustainability in the United States.]*

Here are more thoughts on the complex topic of forest sustainability:

The *Dictionary of Forestry* also states that sustainable forest management is an evolving concept that has several definitions. It offers two, the second of which specifically incorporates the seven criteria from the Montreal Process:

- 1. The practice of meeting the forest resource needs and values of the present without compromising the similar capability of future generations – note sustainable forest management involves practicing a land stewardship ethic that*

*integrates the reforestation, managing, growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and aesthetics.*

*2. The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality, and potential to fulfill, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic, and social functions at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems—note criteria for sustainable forestry include (a) conservation of biological diversity, (b) maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems, (c) maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality, (d) conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources, (e) maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles, (f) maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socioeconomic benefits to meet the needs of societies, and (g) legal, institutional, and economic framework for forest conservation and sustainable management.*

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United States Department of Agriculture (Forest Service). National Report on Sustainable Forests – 2003. 4-5. *Ibid.* 4.

If the SNC wants to put forward anything with a title containing the word "Sustainable." I urge you to include a definition of what that term means to you so that those reading the document or contemplating support or opposition will have adequate information from which to form an educated opinion.

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**Tad Mason, CEO, TSS Inc. –**

Sierra Nevada Initiative is a very impressive document.

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**Jesus Arredondo, Buena Vista Biomass Plant –**

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada Region is California's principal watershed and the origin of 65 percent of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; is home to two-thirds of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humans;

Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada forestlands are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, including lands managed by the federal government;

Whereas, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada result in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in degraded water and air quality, adverse human health impacts, and the loss of wildlife habitat;

Whereas, declining biodiversity with fewer pockets of old growth remaining, fewer snags and downed logs and declining number of hardwoods is also a symptom of declining forest health;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in the loss of carbon stored in the forests and cause significant emissions of greenhouse gases, therefore adversely affecting efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change;

Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate combined with the unhealthy condition of a significant portion of the forest will result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future, further exacerbating these impacts;

Whereas, economic conditions in the Sierra continue to show negative trends, even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierran counties that are significantly higher than the national and state average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;

Whereas, reduced economic return to private forestland owners will result in the accelerated conversion of forestland to other uses (e.g., residential development, golf courses) thus reducing forest landscapes and the societal benefits that they bring;

Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in improved ecological health of forests, including improved wildlife habitat conditions, improved air quality and improved water quality;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy, as well as a variety of wood products, including “value added” products, creating an opportunity for locally based sustainable economic activity:

Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental entities,

to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region by:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, “value added” wood products, dimensional wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in restoration of plant and wildlife habitat stemming from increased resiliency to **wildfire and climate change**, diversity and species composition post treatment;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving these objectives.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

Signed,

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### **Opposition Letter Signed by Numerous Individuals**

I am writing in opposition to Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s Sustainable Sierra Initiative, which would increase logging in the Sierra Nevada; a region that has historically been over-logged. While the initiative states that increasing timber yield from the Sierra would reduce fire risk and increase the economic viability of the various rural towns located there, it would be disastrous on many levels to rely on logging to solve the problems of the Sierras.

Scientific studies have shown that removing trees larger than 9 dbh from the forest does little to decrease fire risk; in fact, it increases that risk by removing the least flammable material in the forest, the tree trunks, opening the canopy to allow flammable brush to grow, and increasing the wind which spreads fire faster. Areas should be made fire safe 200 feet around all structures in the forest. Logging to prevent fires is a fallacy whose perpetuation must be stopped.

Regarding economic improvement in the rural towns located in and around the Sierra, the best employment opportunities in the region are those dealing with tourism, as your own document states that the range serves as one of the states premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year. To enhance

the economic viability of the towns surrounding the Sierra, funding should be directed to enhancing the many opportunities for tourism, and loans given to small start-up businesses who wish to offer something new and different to the world-travelers who visit.

Focusing on logging is a mistake that I sincerely hope the Sierra Nevada Conservancy does not make. As a long-time supporter of the Conservancy, it disappoints me that it could become just another bureaucracy that destroys our natural resources in the name of profits.

Sincerely,

**Laura Staples**  
5792 Whistlewood Circle  
Sarasota, FL 34232

**Janet Westbrook**  
P.O. Box 554  
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

**Mark McGuire**  
pob 53  
Onyx, CA 93255

**Arthur Unger**  
2815 La Cresta Drive  
Bakersfield, CA 93305

**Robert Perlman**  
103-19 68th Road  
Forest Hills, NY 11375

**Lee Sutton**  
231 S. Lilac Street  
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

**Deborah Filipelli, Ph.D.**  
p.o. box 341  
the sea ranch, CA 95497

**Terry Anderson**  
1162 Pigeon Fork Rd  
Lawrenceburg, KY 40342

**William Langsdorf**  
817 S. Shore Drive  
Kansas City, MO 64151

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**Bill Wickman and Laurel Brent-Bumb, Representatives for the Sustainable Forest Action Coalition –**

The Sustainable Forest Action Coalition (SFAC) wishes to comment on the Initiative stated above. SFAC members are representatives from Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Siskiyou, Shasta, Trinity, and Tuolumne Counties that include Supervisors, Chambers of Commerce, Fire Safe Councils, Farm Bureaus, Agricultural Commissions, Forest Products Industry, and Education with a mix of public and private agencies and associations. SFAC's goal is to form a coalition that will cover a geographic area from the Central Sierra's to the Oregon border and also include the Klamath Province and North Coastal region. SFAC covers a geographic area of rural county's whose watersheds drain into the Central Valley and the east side of the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

The main objective of SFAC is to work at the State and Federal level to bring regulatory reform to restore our forests to a healthy condition, maintain the existing forest products infrastructure, and keep our rural communities healthy. By meeting this objective, the coalition also recognizes the additional benefit that thinning to improve forest health provides to their watersheds and furthering their efforts in protecting their natural resources from large wildfires.

Within the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative is a proposed Resolution. SFAC wishes to address one of the "Whereas" statements within the proposed Resolution. The statement we would like to address is;

**Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;**

SFAC is very concerned about this statement. It reflects the misunderstanding of how critical it is for our rural counties to maintain our forest products infrastructure. Without a viable forest products infrastructure, most of the other statements within your Resolution could not be achieved. Sawmills and bio-mass co-generation facilities are the key to economically accomplishing the restoration of our forests and watersheds while improving our wildlife populations and reducing acres lost to large wildfires. There may be opportunity for adding to the existing infrastructure with additional diverse forest products facilities such as home or commercial pellets and expand the biomass power plant industry. However, the assumption that "diversifying local economies" means that new business ventures outside forest products will replace this existing infrastructure has not proven to be the case.

In 2009 mill closures in three different counties within the Sierra Nevada's heightened our concern and need to address the issues surrounding the economic and social impacts when these closures occur. Within these three counties, we lost approximately 450 direct jobs. It is not only these immediate direct job losses, but the additional 1.6-2.25 associated indirect and induced jobs for every 1 direct job within our business communities that causes dramatic loss in local community stability.

This loss of infrastructure in these three counties, El Dorado, Plumas and Tuolumne, have made it even more difficult to accomplish needed vegetation treatments that are vital to our watershed health as well as reducing the ever-increasing threat of large wildfire. Recently the state has endured some of the worst fire seasons in recorded history. The 2003 fire season set a new record in acres burned, which was to be broken only four years later in 2007. Furthermore, a new 75-year *national* record was set by the 2006 fire season. During the summer of 2008, while most of Northern California was enveloped in a smoke cloud from mid-June to the beginning of August, the Northern Sierras were experiencing the largest fires in their history. In 2009, the North State lost approximately 500,000 acres to wildfire. In addition to the direct threat to public health

and safety; those fires also degraded the watersheds that are the prime source of California's water supply.

When discussing the relevance of keeping or replacing existing forest products infrastructure, it is important to consider what these jobs mean to our rural economic and social well-being. Forest workers and the related jobs that this infrastructure provide are all family wage jobs that provide health and insurance benefits. Instead of trying to replace this job sector, we encourage you to consider how to increase the needed acres treated to restore, enhance and stabilize our county's natural resources and forest products infrastructure. With the emphasis on job creation, nationally, the following information should be used to highlight the importance of this effort to revitalize and maintain this economic opportunity.

The National Forest within our Counties had an annual harvest that has been reduced to approximately one fourth to one fifth of our historical levels of the late 1980's and early 1990's. This is a result of current laws, regulations and litigation. It is imperative that we work with the State and Federal land management agencies to emphasize the importance of increasing the acres of needed restoration in our forests and watersheds. When looking at forest related jobs and economics, 1 million board feet of harvest equates to 11.4 new direct and indirect jobs with an average annual wage of \$43,200 per job. We are sure this is low for California, but those statistics were from the Oregon Department of Forestry. Also statistics from the US Agriculture Department showed that for every \$1 million invested in forestry projects 39.7 jobs were created.

If there is a concern that projects are over-cutting our National Forest and causing environmental harm by removing small and intermediate trees, then you should consider the information provided by the Forest Service, Region 5, in their 2009 Westcore Tables. The following table provides a statistical fact that within the Sierra Nevada's, our National Forests are becoming an even larger threat to our rural counties from catastrophic wildfire as a result of an ever increasing inventory of overstocked forests.

**Table 1. National Forest Growth, Mortality and Percentage of Growth Sold in 2009**

<b>FOREST</b>	<b>Productive Forestland (Acres)</b>	<b>Annual Net Growth (mmbf)</b>	<b>Av Annual Mortality (mmbf)</b>	<b>Mortality as % of net growth</b>	<b>2009 Vol Sold (mmbf)</b>	<b>As % of net growth</b>
Modoc	570,754	84.4	40.0	42%	32.13	38.1%
Lassen	860,680	266.2	105.5	36%	69.4	26.1%
Plumas	988,969	1,134	66.5	6%	33.77	3%
Tahoe	669,910	535.1	41.7	8%	28.74	5.4%
El Dorado	393,498	198.2	50.1	26%	26.02	13.1%
Stanislaus	385,691	181.9	41.9	23%	29.86	16.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,869,502</b>	<b>2,399.8</b>	<b>345.7</b>	<b>14.4%</b>	<b>219.92</b>	<b>9.2%</b>

What have our rural forested counties lost as far as forest products infrastructure over the last 10-20 years? The following table will outline this loss over the last 20 years by county. These are the counties that SFAC represents within the Sierra Nevada Province;

**Table 2. Mill Closure from 1989-2009  
And Mills Open by County in 2010**

COUNTY	MILLS CLOSED 1989-1999	MILLS CLOSED 2000-2009	MILLS REMAINING
Amador	2	0	1
Butte	1	0	1
Calaveras	1	0	0
El Dorado	2	2	0
Lassen	2	2	0
Modoc	4	0	0
Nevada	1	0	0
Placer	2	0	2
Plumas	2	(small log mill)*	2
Shasta	10	3	6
Sierra	0	1	0
Siskiyou	4	1	3
Tehama	5	0	0
Tuolumne	1	1	1
Yuba	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>

\*SPI Quincy closed their small log mill in 2009 which is a part of the combination of small and large log facility. SPI has recently stated they plan to reopen the small log mill with two shifts of operation but are curtailing one shift in the large log mill.

After reviewing Table 2, it becomes very apparent that our rural forested counties cannot continue to lose this valuable forest products infrastructure if California is to accomplish the restoration that is outlined in the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative. Many of these counties continue to suffer with extremely high unemployment rates and have not seen other businesses come in to replace their lost forest products infrastructure.

Again, SFAC wants to emphasize the importance of revitalizing and maintaining our forest products infrastructure in order to accomplish your other objectives that you have outlined in the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution. If there is a change in the wording of the "Whereas" discussed above, SFAC supports the Resolution.

If we can be of assistance with your efforts we would enjoy the opportunity to work with the Conservancy.

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Cindy Kolomechuk -

## The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada Region contains California's principal watersheds which provide 65 percent of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; is home to two-thirds of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humans;

Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada forests and grasslands (including federal lands) are showing symptoms of compromised ecosystem health with declining biodiversity, fewer pockets of old growth, snags, downed logs and hardwoods.

Whereas, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada result in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in degraded water and air quality, adverse human health impacts, and the loss of wildlife habitat;

Whereas, declining biodiversity with fewer pockets of old growth remaining, fewer snags and downed logs and declining number of hardwoods is also a symptom of declining forest health;(can remove this one as it was combined with bullet #2)

Whereas, large damaging fires result in the loss of carbon stored in forests and cause significant emissions of greenhouse gases, thereby adversely affecting efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change;

Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate combined with the unhealthy condition of a significant portion of the forest will result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future, further exacerbating these impacts;

Whereas, economic conditions in the Sierra continue to show negative trends, even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierra counties that are significantly higher than the national and state average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;

Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in improved ecological health of forests, including improved habitat conditions and improved water quality;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy, as well as a variety of wood products, including “value added” products, creating an opportunity for locally based sustainable economic activity; and

Whereas collaborative, community-based forest management will reduce controversy over public land management activities.

Therefore, we **declare our** intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental entities, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region **by identifying, supporting and implementing actions, policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving the following objectives:**

- Reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;
- Create and maintain ecologically healthy forests and watersheds by protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon;
- Create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, “value added” wood products, dimensional wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products; and
- Restore plant and wildlife habitat by increasing resiliency, diversity and species composition post treatment.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

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#### **David Welch-**

The following is my comment on the News Release, dated March 30, 2010, inviting public comment on a “Resolution to Reduce Catastrophic Wildfire, Protect the Environment and Create Local Jobs” and the draft resolution posted on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy website. I write to support the project of creating a Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative. Additionally, I support the concept of adopting a resolution designed to elicit support for the Initiative and to provide an initial framework for launching the project. My primary comments deal with the process issues which are embodied in the draft. Before making my first point on process I quote from the News Release and from the draft Resolution. The News Release includes the following: Noting that forest management issues have historically been highly contentious,

Branham added, "Our goal is to bring a wide variety of interests together, and focus on what we all agree on to take action on the ground." The final paragraph of the draft resolution includes: The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process.

First Point: The language of these two excerpts suggest that SNC will only pursue those initiatives on which all the interests can agree. Also, for some readers "collaboration" carries with it the suggestion that decisions made collaboratively require the consent of all the parties to the process.

The preceding may not be what is intended, but assuming that it represents a fair reading of the language, I suggest that limiting the focus to what is commonly agreed as being achievable may preclude some of the best alternatives. Moreover, a decision making process which requires the consent of all the parties is, almost by definition, one which leads to suboptimal decisions.

Second Point: The language of the draft resolution does not explicitly endorse the concept of adopting an experimental approach to test the validity of some of the policy initiatives and other changes which the SNC's process might surface as promising.

Third Point: The SNC website notes that other agencies in the SNC region include USDA Forest Service Region 5, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service, and the State of California Resources Agency.

Since so much of the forested land in the SNC region is owned or managed by one or more the agencies mentioned above, it might be useful to prepare a summary report which highlights those agencies' current approaches to forest management and the associated budgetary limitations they face. The underlying thought here is that policy makers in specific agencies may develop approaches and policies to meet their core responsibilities which are shaped or constrained by budget considerations.

Fourth Point: The draft resolution in paragraph 1 uses the phrase "linked objectives" before providing a list of those objectives and associated key outcomes. I agree with the Initiative's aim of deriving multiple benefits from one project. The draft resolution does not discuss possible conflicts among the objectives and associated key outcomes.

The draft resolution does not directly address economic issues and the potential limits on policy choices in the absence of changes in state or federal statutes. Economics and the potential to change the economics of some processes may be significant.

Fifth Point: I believe the SNC and the signatories to the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative would be well served by viewing the first adopted version of the resolution as merely the first step in an iterative process of outlining the goals and objectives of the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the draft resolution to launch the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative.

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**Calli-Jane Burch, Executive Director, Butte Fire Safe Council**

In review of the resolution I applaud the breath of critical issues you have addressed. From the perspective of a County wide fire safe council I am particularly glad to see the resolutions emphasis on addressing large scale wildfire risks such as with the first

declaration

"Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;"

However the resolution may be enhanced by making note of the beneficial nature of wildfire to the ecosystem when applied safely. Although there are many challenges in being able to use fire in the Sierra due to the small window of time when burning conditions are safe and when air quality conditions are acceptable it is still such an important aspect to the entire health of the system it may warrant mention.

Lastly, education is a strong part of our fire safe council mission and I noticed that the word education is not mentioned in the resolution at this time. Perhaps the importance of education will surface once the resolution is adopted and the goals of the declaration are explored. Each declaration starts with "Identifying, supporting and implementing actions" and perhaps education activities may be "identified and supported" as part of the implementation of the resolution.

Thanks for all the great work putting this together.

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**Ray Nutting, El Dorado County Supervisor, District 2 -**

Very briefly.

- 1) I want the language of the goals and objectives of our county's fire safe council included. These statement can be found on their website.
- 2) We need to reduce fuel loads and create tree spacing that reduces and eliminate almost all of the potential for catastrophic fire.
- 3) We need to understand that control burns need to be used as a fire friendly tool to clean the forest.
- 4) Science is for information to decision makers that need to balance all concerns.
- 5) The urban wild land interface needs to be dealt with first to protect communities.
- 6) Putting people back to work by taking care of the forest is essential.
- 7) All the users of the watersheds should contribute back to the management of the watershed. For example, water users of the watershed pay very little for the management of the area of origin of their water. This has to change. You can't expect the tree's alone to pay for the full cost of management. And, recreation does not even come close to raise enough money to cover the cost.
- 8) A economic formula should be determined to show the benefits of good forestry. For example, for every acre of forest fuels reduction we save so much by not having a catastrophic crown fire. I believe the ratio is somewhere around 20 to 1. The cost of reducing the fuel loads on a per acre bases saves the tax payers 20 times if that same acre burns in a crown fire. The suppression cost is not the answer.
- 9) Forest that are diverse and open will yield more wildlife, filter the water which will increase water quality, and more water will run off later in the year when we need it most.
- 10) We need to include our customs, culture, and economic policies with regards to the public lands that have been included in our county's general plan.

- 11) We need to encourage the involvement of state and local solutions because all decision national need local solutions that are unique to the individual communities. Diversity of the landscape is equally matched with the diversity of the people that live in these mountain communities.
- 12) The budget of the national forest systems should transform over time from fire suppression to fuels management. The concept and work of the current day fire fighter should transform into fuel managers that specialize in preventing catastrophic crown fire by fuel loading formula's. This is a must. The attitude at the national level towards this issue must change.
- 13) I have much more information and please do not hesitate to ask again. 5 generations on the family homestead in Happy Valley at the 4 thousand foot level in El Dorado County./

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**David Bischel, President, California Forestry Association –**

On behalf of the California Forestry Association, I'd like to express our support of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's "Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative." The idea of a public/private partnership that can contribute so many far reaching values to the forests, wildlife, water and communities of this region is a laudable goal. We believe that this initiative has the potential to achieve sustainable gains in the areas of forest health, watershed protection and reductions in pollution to the land and water, while sustaining local communities and their family-wage jobs.

One constructive comment we do have is in the area of economic activity relates to existing forest products production facilities. While there clearly has been dramatic decline in the economic benefits of forest product manufacturing in the Sierras with substantial impact on rural community well-being, forest management and manufacturing remains an important economic foundation for many forest-dependent communities. As such, a critical part of your sustainability strategy needs to recognize the importance of retaining/expanding existing infrastructure to both achieve forest health restoration goals and community stability. I would suggest the following "Whereas" be modified as follows:

**"Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching continue to provide family-wage jobs but are not expected to return to previous levels of the 1980's continue to decline, underscoring the need to conserve and enhance existing infrastructure and diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;"**

And modify the following "Therefore" statement:

**"Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will conserve and enhance existing infrastructure while create new -ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, "value added" wood products, dimensional wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;"**

My organization proudly supports this initiative, and commits our capabilities to help ensure the success of this initiative as a collaborative effort.

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**Stephen Benner, Forest Issues Group -**

The Forest Issues Group (FIG) is grateful for the chance to participate in this process of review. The FIG is a group of residents living in the “North Central Sierra” (Conservancy map at Strategy Document page 4), primarily interested in the conservation of habitat for species dependant on forested areas of the Tahoe National Forest and adjacent public and private forested lands. We have studied the strategy document (Plan), and respectfully comment as follows:

**Economic and Ecological Goals: Compatibility or Conflict?**

The Plan makes clear the SNCs intent to “add value” to existing conditions in the study area by striving to simultaneously promote both economic (or social) and environmental (or ecological) values:

The SNC strives to identify and implement activities that result in integrated environmental, economic and social benefits rather than “either or” outcomes. (*Plan page 10*).

We agree in principle with this intent, and support the effort to look for ways to achieve the dual aspirations of the SNC. However, we are mindful of the frequent disparity between management direction required to promote economic, as opposed to ecological, welfare. For example winter recreation, (e.g. snowmobile use), brings in local revenue, but is disruptive to wildlife, and while the SNC acknowledges this potential for conflict,

There is increasing conflict over various land use decisions in certain portions of the Region and over Regional resource conservation strategies. (*Plan page 12*).

it does not, in our opinion, adequately account for the inherent conflict (ecology vs. economy) over management direction for study area lands. For science-based documentation of this issue, and support for our concern over management conflict, we refer to the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) :

Threats to mammalian species in the Sierra Nevada fall into five categories, four of which are anthropogenic. One general category includes management that generally fails to support wildlife habitat. This results from both misinformation (inappropriate use or interpretation of information, poor or inadequate studies, etc.) and lack of information (impediments to research, lack of specific information on genetic architecture of species, etc.). Often missing is the context for interpretation provided by long-term studies and those that help determine the relationship between common measures of genetic variation (e.g., heterozygosity and allozymes in general) and population fitness. (*SNEP Volume II, Chapter 28, page 802*)

**Note:** In her recent work on marten (*Martes americana*), (see [American Marten Distributions over a 28 Year Period: Relationships with Landscape Change in Sagehen Creek Experimental Forest, California, USA](#) August 19, 2009) Katie Moriarty reports a conflict between timber harvest activity and marten welfare based on habitat degradation and fragmentation and resulting in a significant decline in the marten population. There are, of course, numerous similar cases<sup>1</sup> where conflict between management goals confounds the ability to equitably administer the forest resource.

And:

The tension between local economic concerns (which often call for expanding recreational activity in the short term) and other social values (which often call for limiting recreational

activity over the long term to protect ecological or aesthetic values) is not a new one. It was at the heart of many policy decisions over the past century-and-a-half in the Sierra

Nevada that still define the parameters for today's policy debates. The land and resource management institutions of the twenty-first century will continue to face conflicts over these issues as long as noncommodity uses of the public lands are not valued explicitly. (*SNEP Volume II, Chapter 19, page 604*).

With these references we are suggesting to Plan drafters that conflicts are unfortunate but real, and that a realistic strategy would acknowledge them and address the options for management that are available despite the difficulties they impose. Specifically, we suggest language be included in the Plan that assures against an over-zealous effort to promote "harmony" (Governor Schwarzenagers' term, Plan page 6) at the expense of ecological integrity. For example: "In its pursuit of equitable management direction SNC will carefully avoid promoting any action that would jeopardize habitat quality or otherwise damage the ecological integrity of the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem". Or: "The SNC Plan will found its best management practice standard on the science-based SNEP (or the USDA Forest Service GTR 220 or both)". (Another authorized source for data upon which to base management direction are the Ecological Unit Inventories produced by the Forest Service over the last 15 years).

**The current version of the Plan describes an SNC agenda that strongly supports *increased* "tourism" and recreation in the study area, based on their contribution to state and local economies. The current Plan also recognizes the values of the natural system (items 4, 5 and 6 of Plan page 12, and elsewhere). But by**

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<sup>1</sup> For example reduction in canopy cover from 80% to 50%, a common outcome of timber harvest (economic benefit), significantly alters snowmelt and sedimentation of downslope waters (ecological cost).

**discounting the seriousness of the economy-ecology conflict, the current Plan leaves us with a question “how are you going to get there from here?”. How can the SNC accomplish its economic goals without degrading habitat?**

Realistic treatment, in the final strategy document, of the inherent conflict between management goals (economy vs. ecology), perhaps including a commitment to existing standards of modern forest management, would greatly strengthen the Plan. The FIG strongly recommends this revision

What are “Working Landscapes”?

The definition at Plan page 38 does not appear to explain the usage at Plan page 15 i.e. “ For example, the potential conversion of working landscapes to residential and commercial uses...”. Are working landscapes not already commercial?

### **Effect of Private Ownership on Public Lands**

Program Goal 3 at Plan page 27 expresses concern that owners of private lands in the study area are “in some instances” burdened by the public ownership of adjacent parcels. We suggest that the opposite is more often the case and is of serious concern: Vast tracts of privately held railroad grant lands are mixed in the checkerboard pattern among Forest Service-administered public parcels throughout the study area. This pattern prevents meaningful management for habitat. We suggest that the SNC include language in a revised Plan that addresses the need to consolidate ownership in affected areas so that management designed to renew demographic and genetic exchange throughout the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem, especially along the systems major axis, can proceed. A position of support for the ongoing private effort to achieve the necessary consolidation of these lands might be an appropriate addition to the SNC agenda. **The FIG encourages the SNC to address this as an issue in a revision of the Plan.**

### **Future economic stability.**

Some sense of future economic development in the study area, as seen by the SNC, takes shape under Program Goal 6 at Plan page 33. However, the SNC makes questionable assumptions about the future economic base of the Sierra Nevada region:

The Sierra Nevada economy is rooted in its natural environment by tourism, recreation, sustainable resource management, the production of agricultural products and the **extraction of valuable minerals and building materials**. (emphasis added)(Plan page 33).

Here we have emphasized the reference to extractive uses to make a point: As recreation and tourism increase, extraction of commodities (timber, mining), we submit, will become of increasing concern as conflicting uses<sup>2</sup> and will decline under public

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pressure, while the need for watershed and habitat protection will generate an emerging economy based on maintenance of true forest health, fuels reduction with biomass production, and ecological restoration. **The SNC, it appears to us, might want to address this potential for long-term economic and ecological stability in a revised strategy document.**

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**Chris Horgan, Executive Director, Stewards of the Sequoia -**

We are encouraged to see the Sierra Nevada Conservancy acknowledge the poor conditions in our Forests and the need for active management to promote forest health, provide recreation, support local economies and improve watersheds. Having organizations, local government and agencies work together to achieve those goals is necessary and precedent setting. Perhaps there is a light at the end of the tunnel. On those terms we support The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution. We hope this effort will allow more on the ground fuel reduction projects to be implemented and stop the analysis paralysis that plagues our public lands, as well as help those preservation groups, who have relentlessly opposed active management, to realize that without management our forests and wildlife are being needlessly destroyed on a massive scale.

The language in the resolution appears to embody the major concerns and what can be done to fix them, however there is always room for interpretation. It will be extremely important for the Conservancy to ensure that the focus remains on encouraging active management to promote forest health and not let this program, like so many others, be co-opted into another management blocker.

We would like to be part of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy effort and work with other groups, agencies, and local government to define, endorse, encourage and implement on the ground projects.

**-Local Government Must Be Included-**

The following introductory statement by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy describes a partnership solely between Agencies and Non Government Organizations. It does not provide any role for County's or Local Government. Local Government must be included.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy is proposing the Sustainable Sierra Nevada

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Initiative, a coordinated effort among federal, state and local agencies, in partnership with a wide array of non-governmental entities, to improve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region.

The actual resolution language appears to be more inclusive by stating *wide range of governmental and non-governmental entities*, however with the omission of local government from the introduction, the resolution may not include local government. Perhaps "local government" should be added to the resolution as shown below. Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with a wide range of governmental, local government and non-governmental entities, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. Will the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Coordinate with local governments regarding this proposed Resolution and all actions resulting from this resolution as required under law?

Thank you for this opportunity to be involved in this historic Resolution to Promote Forest Health, Support Local Economies and Reduce Wildfire Hazard.

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**Frank Stewart, Counties' QLG Forester -**

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution that your board will be considering for adoption at their June 2, 2010 board meeting. After reading it, the accompanying information and the twenty one comments posted on your website I must agree with the comments of Supervisor Lyle Turpin, Mariposa County, that the resolution is "too long and should be condensed" and refocused to align and support the headlines of your NEWS RELEASE dated March 30, 2010 which reads – "Sierra Nevada Conservancy Asking for Public Comment on Resolution to Reduce Catastrophic Wildfire, Protect the Environment and Create Local Jobs".

As the enclosed fire map relates the catastrophic fire problem in California is "Getting Worse – Not Better" and the primary "objective" of the resolution for the next ten to fifteen years must be the reduction of catastrophic wildfires that are destroying and threatening our rural communities, watersheds, landscapes and wildlife. The headlines of your NEWS RELEASE place the actions in the correct sequence and the initiative must be developed and implemented accordingly. Rather than advancing a resolution with holistic and nebulous terms that appear to be promoting political agenda's of certain environmental organizations, I encourage you to re-draft the document so that it is a cohesive and cost effective initiative that supports the development and implementation of hazardous fuel reduction and forest restoration projects at the appropriate pace and scale that is required to get the job done on the ground. I attended your March 3<sup>rd</sup>, board meeting in Anderson and you mentioned your conversations with Regional Forester Moore regarding the Forest Services recognition that the current 110,000 acres of annual hazardous fuel reduction activities are far short of the required pace and scale needed in the Sierras. Just in the past two months, I have participated in two separate organizational meetings with the Regional Forester where he has asked for assistance in increasing the hazardous fuel reduction activities

in the Sierras from 110,000 acres per year to 500,000 acres per year. This is a major opportunity to address the catastrophic fire problem in the Sierras and the challenge before the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and other stake holders is to put their political agendas aside and truly develop and support a resolution (initiative) that reduces catastrophic wildfires, protects the environment and creates and sustains local jobs. I have also enclosed a position paper by the Society of American Foresters (SAF) that addresses the "Utilization of Forest Biomass to Restore Forest Health and Improve U.S. Energy Security" and please note that surface, ladder and canopy fuels must be treated in order to reduce the overstocked conditions that are fueling the catastrophic wildfires throughout the west. As such, your resolution must support the existing forest products infrastructure in the Sierras (sawmills, co-generation power plants and stand alone electrical power generating facilities) and encourage local entrepreneurs to step forward and make further long term investments in biomass utilization facilities for the development of biofuels and other value added products.

Another issue that is critically important to counties in the Sierras is Forest Reserve Revenues (25% receipts) that are generated from management activities on national forests in each county. These funds are shared equally between the departments of public works and education. The current provider of these funds is the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act and it will terminate next year and counties will be forced to fall back on the original 25% receipts formula. This is a major concern of the counties throughout the SNC and must be addressed in your resolution. I have also enclosed a copy of the Base Map from the Plumas County Fire Safe Council – Plumas County Fire Plan and hopefully you will see the cohesive and county wide hazardous fuel reduction and fire protection plan strategy for Plumas County. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, I encourage you to incorporate the existing collaborative efforts of County Fire Safe Councils and their County Fire Plans into your resolution. It would also help the collaborative efforts if you had each of your field representatives actively participating in the monthly meetings of the FSC's in their district.

Again, thanks for the opportunity to review and comment on the resolution and I look forward to the development and adoption of a more cohesive, productive and cost effective strategy.

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**Brian Nowicki, California Climate Policy Director, Center for Biological Diversity -**

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity in response to the request for public comments regarding the draft Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution. The Center for Biological Diversity is a non-profit, public-interest conservation organization dedicated to the protection of native species and their habitats through science, policy, and environmental law.

I appreciate the effort that went into drafting this statement, and I recognize the difficulty of describing in a single page the many complex challenges facing Sierra Nevada ecosystems and communities. I also recognize the desire of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to provide a narrative that is appealing to a large number of participants, and the resulting tendency toward general statements. However, as the Resolution is

currently drafted, many of those generalized statements include overly broad generalizations that either fall short of accurately describing the state of the forests of the Sierra Nevada, or lend themselves to misinterpretation. My comments here are intended to highlight some of the instances in which more specific language would enhance the clarity and accuracy of the statements in the Resolution.

The Resolution provides no meaningful indication of what the Conservancy considers to constitute an ecologically healthy forest. This lack of specificity is conspicuous given that the Resolution declares the intention to *“improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region by...implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests...”* At the same time, the Resolution states that *“much of the Sierra Nevada forestlands are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, including lands managed by the federal government.”* In the absence of any criteria, this general statement can be assumed to apply to any forest stand in any forest type in the Sierra Nevada.

Taken together, these statements create a serious risk that the Resolution could be used as justification for any and all forest management, including ecologically damaging practices, on any portion of any forest in the Sierra Nevada.

The Resolution states that *“sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy, as well as a variety of wood products, including ‘value added’ products, creating an opportunity for locally based sustainable economic activity.”* This is a broad assertion for which no evidence has been offered, either in the Resolution or the associated materials. In fact, there are concerns that the fuel demands of biomass plants could result in tremendous pressure on the nearby forests, ultimately forcing harvests to increase and continue beyond sustainable levels.

The Resolution repeatedly uses the phrase “large damaging fires.” It is important to note that this phrase has no practical or ecological meaning. All fires are damaging to some degree, as they are also ecologically beneficial to some degree, and the understanding of the size of a fire is highly dependent on definition and context. The Resolution uses this term repeatedly to refer to high-severity and stand-replacing fires, as well as forest fires in general. More important, the Resolution fails to acknowledge the important role of fire as a natural component of the forest ecosystem. The result is that with respect to the Resolution, practically any forest fire may be described as a “large damaging fire,” and assumed to be a purely negative impact on the forest.

Similarly, the Resolution fails to acknowledge the responsibility of communities, residents, and landowners to treat homes and buildings to make them less vulnerable to fire. As a result, statements such as *“Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities,”* can be interpreted as implying that forest projects that aim to reduce the incidence of forest fire, rather than treatment of homes and properties, can protect communities from the threat of forest fire.

The following comments refer to specific statements in the Resolution, and proposed changes to make those statements more specific or accurate.

*“Whereas, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada result in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts.”* This statement would be more accurate as “While fire is a critical natural component of Sierra Nevada forest ecosystems, high-severity fires can result in a wide variety of negative impacts...”

*“Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy.”* This statement would be more accurate and useful if it included an explicit requirement that biomass plants must be scaled and operated in an ecologically sustainable manner. It is important to note that the sustainability definition is a requirement of many of the renewable energy policies to which the statement refers.

*“Whereas sustainable forest management can result in improved ecological health of forests, including improved habitat conditions and improved water quality.”* This statement would be more accurate as “Sustainable forest management should ensure the ecological health of forests, the long-term viability of all associated plant and wildlife populations, sufficient habitat conditions, and high water quality.”

*“Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in restoration of plant and wildlife habitat stemming from increased resiliency, diversity and species composition post treatment.”* This statement would be more accurate as “Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in the preservation and restoration of plant and wildlife habitat...”

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

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**Chad Hanson Ph.D., Director, John Muir Project -**

On behalf of the John Muir Project I am submitting the following comments on the Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s proposed “Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution”. I have a Ph.D. in Ecology from UC Davis with a research focus on forest and fire ecology in Sierra Nevada forests. The basic assumptions expressed in the draft Resolution with regard to wildland fire, the ecological health of Sierra Nevada forests, carbon storage, forest ecosystem resilience, and the effects of increased biomass logging are strongly contradicted by the current scientific evidence, which I synthesize and summarize in my recent report, “The Myth of Catastrophic Wildfire” (Hanson 2010). I am attaching Hanson (2010) as the main part of my comments on the draft Resolution, since my report directly addresses the misconceptions and scientifically faulty assumptions expressed in the draft Resolution. Please feel free to contact me any time to discuss these issues, or if you would like any of the studies that I cite below, or in Hanson (2010) (references not found in the reference section of Hanson 2010 are included below). I would also be happy to take Sierra Nevada Conservancy staff on a field visit

to some recent post-fire habitat in the Sierra Nevada to see firsthand the ecological richness of these areas.

In addition, below I include a synopsis of some key points covered in Hanson (2010). I offer this material in the hope of facilitating management based upon sound science and ecology:

### **The Proposed Resolution's Characterization of Wildland Fire is Inconsistent with Current Science**

Patches of high-intensity fire are a natural part of fire regimes in Sierra Nevada forests, and there is less high-intensity fire now than there was historically

The stated goals for the proposed Resolution make scientifically unsound references to “catastrophic wildfire”, and the proposed Resolution refers to “large damaging fires”.

This incorrectly implies that areas of high-intensity fire (patches where most or all trees are killed) are somehow unnatural in Sierra Nevada forests. The science clearly contradicts this assumption. While, prior to fire suppression and logging, low-intensity fire occurred frequently in Sierra Nevada forests, less frequent high-intensity fire also occurred, including in ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forests. This has been documented in numerous scientific studies (Leiberg 1902, Stephenson et al. 1991, Beaty and Taylor 2001, Bekker and Taylor 2001, Nagel and Taylor 2005, Hanson 2007, Collins and Stephens 2010). Many of these historic high-intensity fire areas were large—hundreds of acres in size, and sometimes much larger (Leiberg 1902, Stephenson et al. 1991, Nagel and Taylor 2005, Hanson 2007, Stephens and Collins 2010). The proposed Resolution's implication that only homogeneous low-intensity fire is natural is based upon incorrect assumptions, not science.

Based upon data directly presented in published studies, or basic calculations using data presented in published studies, the natural, historic (i.e., in the absence of fire suppression and logging) high-intensity fire rotation intervals in ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, and white/red fir forests of the Sierra Nevada were approximately 200-400 years—meaning that a given stand would, on average, experience high-intensity fire effects once every 200-400 years (Minnich et al. 2000, Beaty and Taylor 2001, Bekker and Taylor 2001, Stephens et al. 2007, Stephens and Collins 2010), while the current high-intensity fire rotations in the Sierra Nevada are well over 800 years (Hanson 2007, Odion and Hanson 2006, Odion and Hanson 2008, Miller et al. 2009), indicating that there was at least 2-3 times more high-intensity fire prior to fire suppression than there is now.

*Patches of high-intensity fire are very important ecologically, and provide some of the best wildlife habitat*

The proposed Resolution makes the scientifically unsound assumption that a “loss of wildlife habitat” is being caused by “large damaging fires” in the Sierra Nevada, and that the forest ecosystems are “unhealthy” because such fires occur. In fact, the areas of high-intensity fire resulting from large, intense wildland fires create some of the best, most biodiverse, and most ecologically rich wildlife habitat, according to the current

science (Bock and Lynch 1970, Hutto 2006, Noss et al. 2006, Hanson and North 2008, Swanson et al. 2010, USDA 2010). High-intensity, or stand-transforming, fire creates ecologically-vital “snag forest habitat”, which is rich with large snags, large downed logs, dense pockets of natural conifer regeneration, patches of native shrub habitat, or “montane chaparral”, and large live trees.

In snag forest habitat, countless species of flying insects are attracted to the wealth of flowering shrubs which propagate after stand-transforming fire—bees, dragonflies, butterflies, and flying beetles. Many colorful species of birds, such as the iridescent blue Mountain Bluebird, nest and forage in snag forest habitat to feed upon the flying insects. In order to feed upon the larvae of bark beetles and wood-boring beetles in fire-killed trees, woodpeckers colonize snag forest habitat shortly after the fire, excavating nest cavities in large snags. The woodpeckers make new nest holes each year, leaving the old ones to be used as nests by various species of songbirds. Many rare and imperiled bat species roost in old woodpecker cavities in large snags, and feed upon the flying insects at dusk. Small mammals, such as snowshoe hares and woodrats, live in the shrub patches and large downed logs, and raptors, such as the Spotted Owl, benefit from the increase in the abundance of their small mammal prey and, in fact, recent evidence shows that Spotted Owls preferentially select high-intensity fire areas (that have not been salvage logged) for foraging, while preferring low-intensity fire areas for roosting (Bond et al. 2009). Deer browse upon the vigorous new plant growth that follows stand-transforming fire, and bears benefit from the increased abundance of their prey as well. A number of native wildlife species, such as the Black-backed Woodpecker, are largely restricted to snag forest habitat for nesting and foraging. In fact, the Black-backed Woodpecker depends upon large patches of high-intensity fire (generally minimum of 200-300 acres per pair) that have recently occurred (generally no more than 6 years or so post-fire), have not been salvage logged, and occurred in areas that were dense, high-canopy cover, mature/old-growth forest prior to the fire (Hutto 1995, Dixon and Saab 2000, Hutto and Gallo 2006, Hanson and North 2008, Russell et al. 2007, Hutto 2008). Without a continuous supply of this ephemeral habitat, they won't survive.

Snag forest habitat is alive, and vibrant. It is colorful, and rich with varied sounds, given the sheer density of wildlife activity. It is the most rare, endangered, and ecologically important forest habitat in western U.S. forests, and the stand-transforming fires that create this habitat are not damaging the forest ecosystem. Rather, they are advancing ecological restoration. There is nothing “catastrophic” about wildland fire in these forests, especially where stand-transforming fire effects occur, creating snag forest habitat.

We do not need to be afraid of the effects of fire in forest ecosystems of the western United States. Wildland fire is doing important and essential ecological work. It is keeping countless wildlife species alive. Our challenge, in the new and emerging paradigm, is to make certain that homes are protected so that we can allow wildland fire to do its vital and life-giving work in our forests. In short, we need to stop our futile battle against wildland fire and learn to live well with fire, reminding ourselves that

western U.S. conifer ecosystems evolved with fire and are adapted to it. Excluding fire from these ecosystems is like trying to keep rain out of a rainforest.

Here is what the current science concludes about high-intensity fire areas:

USDA [U.S. Forest Service] (2010):

“It is clear from our first year of monitoring three burned areas that post-fire habitat, especially high severity areas, are an important component of the Sierra Nevada ecosystem...post-fire areas are not blank slates or catastrophic wastelands; they are a unique component of the ecosystem that supports a diverse and abundant avian community...”

Noss et al. (2006):

“Overall species diversity, measured as the number of species—at least of higher plants and vertebrates—is often highest following a natural stand-replacement disturbance...post-fire (salvage) logging does not contribute to ecological recovery; rather, it negatively affects recovery processes...”

“Currently, early-successional forests (naturally disturbed areas with a full array of legacies, ie not subject to post-fire logging) and forests experiencing natural regeneration (ie not seeded or replanted), are among the most scarce habitat conditions in many regions.”

Hutto (2006):

“Besides the growing body of evidence that large, infrequent events are ecologically significant and not out of the range of natural variation (Foster et al. 1998, Turner & Dale 1998), an evolutionary perspective also yields some insight into the ‘naturalness’ of severely burned forests.”

“The dramatic positive response of so many plant and animal species to severe fire and the absence of such responses to low-severity fire in conifer forests throughout the U.S. West argue strongly against the idea that severe fire is unnatural. The biological uniqueness associated with severe fires could emerge only from a long evolutionary history between a severe-fire environment and the organisms that have become relatively restricted in distribution to such fires. The retention of those unique qualities associated with severely burned forest should, therefore, be of highest importance in management circles.”

“The ecological cost of salvage logging speaks for itself, and the message is powerful. I am hard pressed to find any other example in wildlife biology where the effect of a particular land-use activity is as close to 100% negative as the typical postfire salvage-logging operation tends to be.”

“...severe fires are themselves restorative events...rehabilitation occurs naturally as part of plant succession...”

Kotliar et al. (2002):

“Many bird species whose abundances were consistently higher in burned compared to unburned forests...also appeared to use stand-replacement burns more readily than low-severity and moderate-severity burns.”

Hutto (1995):

“Stand-replacement fires should not be viewed as unnatural disasters that can (and should) be prevented...”

“Recent full-page ads...have, in fact, emphasized the fire-prevention ‘benefit’ of forest thinning. Such a consequence may be fine at the urban-forest interface. It may be a well-intentioned but misplaced goal, however, for forested wildlands.”

“Because the most suitable nest trees for cavity excavation are snags that are themselves old-growth elements, one might even suggest that many of the fire-dependent, cavity-nesting birds depend not only on forests that burn, but on older forests that burn.”

Lindenmayer et al. (2004):

“To many ecologists, natural disturbances are key ecosystem processes rather than ecological disasters that require human repair. Recent ecological paradigms emphasize the dynamic, nonequilibrium nature of ecological systems in which disturbance is a normal feature...and how natural disturbance regimes and the maintenance of biodiversity and productivity are interrelated...”

“...[post-fire] salvage harvesting removes critical habitat for species, such as cavity-nesting mammals, woodpeckers, invertebrates like highly specialized beetle taxa that depend on burned wood, and bryoflora closely associated with recently charred logs...”

**The Proposed Resolution’s Characterization of Wildland Fire, Carbon Storage, Forest Health, and the Effects of Biomass Logging is Inconsistent with Current Science**

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**Christopher Hodge-**

As a long time resident of the mid-elevations, I have seen what our current fire management policy has got us nowhere. It is a simple matter of fact that fire is an integral part of environment and we need to stop allowing our forests to be choked with young conifers. Fire rotation practices that our indigenous neighbors carried out for millennia, has been proven to increase growth and productivity of many species of plants that can be significant food sources for wildlife (blackberry, gooseberry/currants, many ceanothus species, hazel, even mycelium such as chanterelles etc.). even our current burning practices often focuses on clearing and making burn piles which is helpful, but a complete ground burn is needed to reap the full benefits of controlled burns. The practice of fire rotation is best done in 5-10 year cycles which should be determined by ecologists, accounting for the factors of different plant community needs and elevation as higher elevation ecosystems growing season is shorter so regrowth will take longer. Fire zones should be created in specific fire districts, with each different zone being burned one year out of the several year rotation. This would make it so a district would be completely burned over the rotation period, this would reduce the impact on wildlife as each zone should sized to be able to burn safely over the year period. This would be implemented on public wild lands and on larger (50 acres+) private wild land, with those who want to opt out having to pay wild fire fees.

If this regime of low intensity burning of our forests becomes implanted, this would mean that regional fire crews that are more specifically trained to clear and burn land

evenly could be staffed by the Bureau of Land Management, which would bring much needed jobs to our region. And this initial cost of carrying more employees to fill these positions would be offset in the long run by saving money on very costly (large fires can exceed a billion dollars from fighting it and damages) wild land fire fighting.

Another concern about our forest are the amount of junk dumped in National Forests. I live adjacent to the El Dorado National Forest and there is scarcely an area that has vehicle access that is not degraded by illegal dumpers, messy campers or firearm enthusiasts. A person cannot go for a walk into the woods without coming across a wrecked vehicle and household trash. I have found discarded oil in leaking containers, spilling directly onto the base of a 500 year old white fir, and I am sad to say this is not uncommon nor surprising. That is why, as part of fire control, we should have the same work force that would perform prescribed burn would also aid in trash removal from the areas they are working. In addition, more community involvement in the upkeep of our forests and law enforcement patrols in areas where illegal dumping is common could dramatically improve the cleanliness and health of our forests.

So please, let's help our mountains maintain its bountiful biodiversity, keep it safe from high intensity conflagrations that occur all too often now, keep it healthy and free of garbage, and let's create more sustainable jobs that help both our economy and our ecosystem.

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**Sierra County Board of Supervisors -**

The Sierra County Board of Supervisors has reviewed the contents of the proposed "Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative" and has authorized the following comments for inclusion in the record of proceedings to be considered by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board of Directors on June 3, 2010.

First and foremost, the initiative centers upon forest and range lands within the Sierra Nevada and a primary assumption that appears prominently in the draft initiative is "traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities". Ranching and a forest products industry are essential components of a healthy and viable economy in many Sierra Nevada counties and rather than accept their further decline or demise, the resolution should recognize their essential value and identify a means to sustain and improve their existence. There is a great disparity between ranching and forestry related issues in the Southern Sierra Nevada as compared to the Northern Sierra Nevada and the potential for sustainability in the Northern Sierra Nevada region is fundamental to a successful working landscape containing a viable ranching and agricultural economy as well as a healthy forest products industry that provides forest and watershed health, fire protection, biomass removal, and carbon sequestration.

Secondly and equally concerning the success of the initiative is the primary focus on public lands. Most of the public lands within the Sierra Nevada are managed by the Forest Service and to a lesser extent, the Bureau of Land Management while private

and State owned lands are under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire). This identifies two potential conflicts that need to be resolved through the resolution. The first conflict is the interface and jurisdictional issues between the new initiative and the federal agencies. It is obvious and abundantly clear that these federal agencies have a difficult time or inability to deliver an effective and sustainable forest management plan. How can this initiative be effective in interfacing with these federal agencies? The second conflict is the apparent duplication of agency goals between CalFire and the proposed initiative. Are we now setting up a second agency responsible for forestry related issues and on-the-ground treatments and fire protection? We do not need another bureaucracy or a medium to stimulate conflict between two State agencies. This needs to be abundantly clear and clarified in the resolution.

Third and of critical importance to "local" control with the avoidance of duplicity and the avoidance of any creation of additional layers of bureaucracy, the initiative proposes to create a "Sierra Nevada Coordinating Council" consisting of federal, state, and local agencies and key stakeholders. It should be clearly written and concise that local government should control this implementation plan. Otherwise, the potential for duplication, for conflict, and for overlapping of jurisdictions and responsibilities will be a driving force and become divisive. The suggestion that SNC staff or a coordinating council knows best for local government and its respective decisions is the beginning of an erosion of local decision making.

Generally speaking, the two stated objectives of the initiative which include creating ecologically healthy forests/watersheds and creating sustainable local economic activity are applauded and likely supported by most participants in the commenting process. However, as one reads through the proposed resolution on the initiative, specificity needs to be provided in the resolution to assure that the following concerns are identified and methods for addressing the concerns are provided with great clarity:

- 1) Please review the attached letter to Regional Forester, Randy Moore dated February 2, 2010 approved by and sent by this Board of Supervisors outlining concerns over Forest Service forest management planning and implementation. The issues raised and the positions expressed in this letter are most appropriate and while somewhat blunt, it is a true and accurate statement of facts.
- 2) Focus where appropriate on the existence of County Fire Safe and Watershed Councils and make every effort to funnel funding and implementation through these organizations and local government.
- 3) Assess and highlight the importance of Forest Reserve revenues to the existence of local counties and schools.
- 4) Programs for implementation of projects that serve the initiative need to be directed through the counties and fire safe and watershed councils and not from any State agency, including the Conservancy.
- 5) Seek clarity and definition of "sustainability" and "working landscape". These terms being important to the overall initiative process, need a universal definition. For example, sustainability in Sierra County at this very moment may include

biomass chips as necessary for “sustainability” of its only power producing plant and source of employment yet this does not imply that a sawmill and the necessity for logs is not important to the region. One should not trump the other as these terms are being used.

- 6) Make it clear that the Conservancy is not attempting to build another layer of bureaucracy of regionalizing programs. The Conservancy can be a very effective resource and medium for education and outreach but those involved from the Conservancy and in the role of interfacing between agencies need hands-on experience and the ability and charge to be “out on the ground” to observe and understand the agency setting, the environmental setting, and the issues to community viability and sustainability. Strive to invest in time and funding, seed programs or processes that produce actual results in sustainability rather than more meetings, more staff, and more bureaucracy.

One of the critical issues facing this initiative is understanding and addressing economic and ecological goals. One of the prime questions facing the very goals of the “Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative” is understanding what it is about the current system that prevents sustainability and how can it be changed. Ecological goals and realistic treatments can produce sustainability. One of the most fundamental goals of the initiative should be focused on resolving these conflicts. Sustainability, when defined, should not be the demise of the timber or ranching industry nor should it be habitat degradation, fragmentation, or declines in wildlife or environmental values. In summary, a most volatile condition has placed the forest communities and resources of the Sierra Nevada at risk like never before. This condition is the paralysis that has plagued efforts to plan, implement, and monitor projects related to watershed and forest health that would produce a significant reduction in wildfire risk and devastation resulting from these increasingly catastrophic fires. This combined with the continuing decline of social and economic conditions throughout the Sierra Nevada demand the engagement and commitment of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to form a sustainable partnership with local government.

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**John Eaton, Mountain Area Preservation Foundation -**

The Mountain Area Preservation Foundation is supportive of your Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative, but we feel that there is more to managing the Sierra than the forest and its products, good and bad. What you really have presented is a Sustainable Sierra Nevada Forest Initiative. If you are talking about the Sierra and its communities as a whole, you would need other elements such as:

- Affordable housing; the communities are not sustainable unless the people that work there can live there.
- Diversifying the economy beyond tourism, forestry, and forests products.
- Reducing auto traffic by keeping people close to their jobs and by promoting mass transportation

- Promoting green building throughout the region.

Calling it a Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative may result in a larger, more complex document than you want, and it may be simpler to change the title to more accurately reflect the scope.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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**Karen Buhr, Executive Director, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) -**

CARCD first wants to commend you on the tremendous work you have done for the Sierra Nevadas over the years and for this visionary proposal. The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative addresses the needs of the region well. The priorities, objectives, and initiatives are well placed and in line with the values and needs of the communities. The focus on regional efforts is well placed.

We hope that the initiative will not change the mission of The Conservancy. The Conservancy has done a tremendous job of supporting local efforts and local organizations through the grant funding program. We hope that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy will continue to pass money through to build local capacity rather than beginning to implement projects through the conservancy itself. Taking this funding stream away from local efforts at a time when funding is drying up would be devastating to local organizations. In order to keep the local organizations and thus the economy of the Sierras strong, it is essential that the grant funds be channeled through local organizations to meet the objectives of the Sierra Nevada Initiative.

We thank you for the funding you have provided in the past to our organization as well as the local RCDs in the Sierra Nevada Region.

Please, continue with the fantastic work that you have been doing, and if we can assist in anyway, let us know.

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**Cyndi Hillery, Legislative Advocate, Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) –**

On behalf of our thirty-one member counties, the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) appreciates the efforts of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to improve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region through the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative (Initiative), and would like to express our support of the concepts contained in the draft Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution (Resolution). Nineteen of RCRC's member counties are in the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Region, and are pleased that SNC has developed this plan to facilitate good stewardship in the Region.

RCRC supports the approach SNC has taken to not focus strictly on one issue such as fire prevention or habitat restoration, but rather to look at the whole picture by including such issues as economic development and inter-governmental relationships. However, it is vital to remain mindful of the damage caused by previous major fires in this region, and the awesome power and destructive force looming in California's unmanaged forests and wildlands. Because current forest management law makes fire prevention work prohibitively expensive, slow to gain approval, and subject to widespread legal

challenge, a common sense approach toward reducing the effects and severity of wildfires that have plagued California and the nation over the last decade needs to be established. Selective fuels reduction work, along with other forest management tools, must be encouraged in private, state, and federal forestland in order to protect homes, businesses, and natural resources.

Moreover, in many of these areas that previously relied heavily on timber-related activity for the jobs and economic growth, unemployment has skyrocketed and growth and development has either ceased or gone backwards as the timber industry had greater and greater restrictions placed upon it. This initiative's focus of diversifying the economies of these areas by increasing tourism, recreation, and biomass energy industries shows a deep understanding of the importance these communities play in the overall protection of these areas.

By dedicating time and attention to the biomass energy issue, the initiative highlights the possible win-win-win aspect of increases to this industry. Not only would increasing biomass availability bring jobs and economic growth to lagging areas, but better fuels management for fire prevention could take place with the material going to biomass plants to create green, renewable power.

While the Initiative does discuss the need for measureable progress and a dedication to working collaboratively with local, state and federal officials, RCRC would like to see a stronger emphasis on these two issues. The need for clear, discernable goals and "on the ground" benchmarks for projects is key to the longevity and credibility of such an initiative. Additionally, focusing attention on the key issue of collaboration and partnership between all levels of government, and facilitating partnership in decision-making from the beginning of projects allows the institutional knowledge and on-the-ground experience of local governments to be utilized most effectively.

RCRC thanks SNC for its efforts in the introduction of this initiative and the agency's commitment to focus key stakeholders on this important issue. The implementation of an overarching plan for the Region so that it can be most effectively managed for fire prevention, watershed protection, and economic development of some of the most rural areas within California is vital to preserve the health of the Sierra Nevada. RCRC looks forward to working with you in implementing your goals in the future.

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**Cindy Noble, Sierra County Fire Safe and Watershed Council -**

The Sierra County Fire Safe and Watershed Council is generally in support of this initiative. The council would like to know more about the "How" of this effort. If the resolution actually represents a commitment on the part of signatories to work together to identify, initiate and support actions necessary to achieve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, then we support the resolution 100%.

It is also important to recognize the needs of small rural communities, which are struggling to survive. Please consider adding some language

that supports communities in the Sierras whom provide services and amenities for full time rural residents

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**Keith Nakatani, Director, California Hydropower Reform Coalition -**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments about the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative. The California Hydropower Reform Coalition supports the SNC mission and Initiative intent "to improve the long-term environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region;" but we believe the framework of the proposed Initiative and Resolution should be broadened to better achieve the overall intent. Specifically, we are concerned that the Initiative:

- Does not adequately address water management, river restoration and enhancement, and increasing biodiversity.
- Does not include enhancing recreation opportunities.
- Process to develop and finalize the language did not allow enough public discussion.

We suggest the following changes:

Regarding objectives:

- Creating ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, thereby protecting and enhancing habitat and water quality while reducing the risk of catastrophic fire, *and increasing biodiversity.*
- Creating sustainable local economic activity in the Region through increasing the sustainable production of renewable biomass energy and a variety of wood products, *and increasing recreational opportunities.*

Regarding outcomes:

- Providing for protection *and enhancement* of key habitats for a variety of threatened and endangered species.
- *Increasing recreational opportunities -- which will strengthen local economies.*

Regarding Resolutions:

- *Whereas the vast network of hydroelectric facilities is a critical component of California's energy portfolio, the facilities block fish passage, adversely impact riverine habitat, are a significant cause of the collapsing salmonid populations, and adversely impact recreational opportunities.*

Regarding actions:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, "value added" wood products, dimensional wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products, *from sustainable watershed management activities, and from increasing recreational opportunities.*

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

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**Group of Conservation Organizations in the Sierra Nevada - Katherine Evatt, President, Foothill Conservancy; Craig Thomas, Executive Director, Sierra Forest Legacy; John Buckley, Executive Director, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center; Warren Alford, Program Associate, Sierra Forest Legacy; Addie**

Jacobson, Policy Advocate, Ebbetts Pass Forest Watch; Terry Davis,  
Conservation Coordinator Sierra Club, Mother Lode Chapter-

We are writing as members of the conservation community working in the Sierra Nevada with comments on the Conservancy's proposed "Sustainable Sierra Initiative". We appreciate the leadership that the Conservancy has demonstrated in developing the initiative and offer in the attached document some changes to the language that the conservation community can support.

We support the idea of developing a sound framework for restoration of Sierra forests that will restore their ecological health and function, help protect our communities from unmanaged wildfires, and promote the utilization of wood generated from restoration activities. This project has the potential to build a restoration forest economy, based on sound restoration principles that will lead to long-term economic stability and living wage jobs for forest workers in our communities.

We look forward to working together to promote this new vision for the management of the Sierra range into the future.

### The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Forest Resolution

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada Region is California's principal watershed and the origin of 65 percent of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; and is home to two-thirds of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humanspeople;

Whereas, ~~much of the Sierra Nevada~~certain public and private forestlands in the Sierra Nevada are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, ~~including lands managed by the federal government~~;

Whereas, ~~while fire is a part of Sierra Nevada forest ecosystems and necessary for forest health, unmanaged large-damaging~~ fires in the Sierra Nevada can result in result in a wide variety of negative impacts including~~cause~~ loss of life and property, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities, and other significant economic impacts;

Whereas, ~~large-damagingunmanaged~~ fires can result in degraded water and air quality, adverse human health impacts, and ~~the loss of~~altered wildlife habitat;

Whereas, current forest conditions, including declining biodiversity with fewer remaining ~~pockets-stands~~ of old growth ~~remaining~~, fewer snags and downed logs and declining number of hardwoods ~~is also a~~are symptoms of declining forest health;

Whereas, large ~~damaging-stand-replacing~~ fires result in the loss of some of the carbon stored in ~~the forests-trees~~ and ~~cause~~increased short-term ~~significant~~ emissions of greenhouse gases, ~~therefore adversely affecting efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change~~;

Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate may lead to combined with the unhealthy condition of a significant portion of the forest will result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future, further exacerbating these impacts;

Whereas, Sierra communities continue to struggle for economic resilience and sustainability, economic conditions in the Sierra continue to show negative trends, even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierra counties that are significantly higher than the national and state average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue their decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;

Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy plants, which can be scaled and operated in an ecologically sustainable manner;

Whereas sustainable forest management can should result in improved ensure the ecological health of forests, including sufficient improved habitat conditions and improved high water quality;

Whereas, sustainable forest management should preserve the Sierra's scenic beauty and ensure continued recreational use;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy and wood products, as well as a variety of wood products, including "value added" products, thereby creating an opportunity for locally owned based sustainable economic activity businesses, family-wage jobs, and diversified local and regional economic activity;

Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental entities, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region by:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of ecologically large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and as well as improving the fire-resistance of local in our homes, properties and communities;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds while, protecting habitat and species, water supply, and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon in plants and soil;

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, ~~biomass energy, biofuels,~~ “value-added” wood products, biomass energy, biofuels, dimensional and other commercial wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in preservation or restoration of plant and wildlife habitat stemming from increased resiliency, diversity and species composition ~~post treatment~~;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving these objectives.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

**Kelli McCune, ACCG Member**

After receiving your email on Monday regarding this Resolution, I asked our policy team to take a look at the resolution. In case Stacey, our Policy Director, didn't get back to you, I just wanted to let you know that we are willing to consider the resolution once it's formalized. When the policy team did read through the resolution, one main concern was about the tone of the “whereas” passage that is at the top of page two. It came across unnecessarily negative about ranching and the initial feedback from the team was that this particular passage could be reworded to have a more positive tone that provides a stronger message. I hope this feedback is considered before the resolution is formalized, and thank you for the opportunity to provide input. I look forward to taking the final resolution to the policy team for consideration, and I will see you next Wednesday!

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**Michelle Miller, Department of Public Works, Mariposa**

I do not feel we can endorse the Resolution as it stands, because I am concerned that SNC may have gotten ahead of themselves—that we have already identified the product without paying enough attention to determining the real needs. Essentially, too much emphasis on the product, and not enough on the process.

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**Erick Robertson, Alpine Sierra Mills**

I am concerned about reference to rising temperatures due to climate change...mentioned that this aspect of climate change is being hotly contested right now, to the point that some are calling for Gore's Peace Prize to be revoked...thinks it could be politically polarizing...though he does think it's appropriate to mention climate change, perhaps just change the rising temperatures part.

**Larry Ballew, Coarsegold Resource Conservation District**

I have general concerns that the resolution focuses too much on the process, and not enough on results

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**Lyle Turpin, Mariposa County Board of Supervisors**

I think it is too long, and should be condensed somewhat.

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**Stephanie Lucero, Sierra Nevada Coordinator Indian Development Resources and Services**

So just to get it out of the way, While we share many of your objectives (see website, brochure , etc.) IDRS does not take positions before confirmation from tribes on substantive issues. See comments to National Planning Rule. All we can do as an organization is support tribal collaboration and consultation, thus maintaining a neutral position on other issues. Now that the lawyer talk is out of the way here are some more substantive feedback. One issue is the initiative does not address tribal rights and interest explicitly. We would suggest a clause or in the alternative a statement recognizing Tribal land rights (i.e. traditional aboriginal land title, rights and uses). There are clauses addressing social and economic issues around Sierra Nevada conditions, however consultation and collaboration with tribal governments and communities should be part of this language.

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**Chuck Sikora, Sikora Forestry,**

Just read the draft resolution. A grammatical comment (I don't remember the rule name): a multiple subject is followed by a singular verb – ¶ 4 & 5 – ... fires in the Sierra Nevada result ... I don't agree with ¶ 6. Unfortunately we have *moresnags* and down logs – heavy material – than found in a healthy forest. This condition is favorable for some wildlife. It is however, indicative of an unhealthy forest condition. A balance is the minimal dead wood to reduce heavy fuel loads while at the same time providing wildlife habitat. Keeping in mind that what is desirable for one species (plant or animal) is detrimental to another (plant or animal).Our forests produce far more cellulose yearly than can decay and incorporate back into the soil. This is a defense against natural fire in a natural ecosystem. We changed the natural regime at the beginning of the 20th Century resulting in overly dense forests with huge fuel loads. Now we must use fire and/or mechanical methods to remove this excess wood. My goal is to find an outlet for my clients' wood to pay for restoring their ecosystems.I do not agree that there is a declining hardwood population. This was true forty to fifty years ago when hardwoods were being removed to make more room for pines – even cedar density was being reduced for the same reason. Awfully short sighted since cedar is now the most valuable (in dollars) species in the woods.May I suggest: *Whereas, declining*

*biodiversity with fewer pockets of old growth remaining and a very large number of snags and downed logs*

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**Andy Gordus, Member CSWC**

Fire ecology is part of the ecosystem. Some species of plants are fire dependent to regenerate their growth. (ie some pine cones need fire to open the cone and release the seeds)

I prefer the "loss of wildlife habitat" be changed to the "temporary loss of wildlife habitat". The McNalley fire down in Kern County a few years back was a big fire. Although there were patches where the fire got too hot and did soil damage, there were pockets of remaining habitat due to the daily wind shifts during the day and night. Overall it left a mosaic of burnt open areas and patches of undamaged habitat.

Also would change "loss of carbon" to "temporary loss of carbon". Again fires recycle the plant nutrients back into the soil for the next generation of growth. We prefer more control burns after the first rains. Have the moisture to control the fire, plus additional rains will clean the air. The air board does not agree.

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**Roger Bales, UC Merced**

I received this from a colleague on the email list below. Are you aware of this statement of forests & fire? I think it really misses an opportunity to highlight the challenges and changes in management practices needed to sustain water quantity/yield, mitigate floods and the pressing need to re-examine management strategies to take water seriously as a primary management aim for Sierra Nevada forests. The emphasis in this statement is on the traditional "water quality" concerns. Climate warming, plus landcover change mean water yield will change; as you know this has significant economic and forest management implications. It would be great if the SNC could be more out in front on water, alongside forest fires.

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**Richard Pland**

Tuolumne County Supervisor (**comments were transcribed by SNC staff from the Supervisor hand written document**)

"Doesn't seem to support the existing infrastructure, i.e. Mills, Why not?" He made some recommendations to the wording of the document as well.

"Today, many Sierra Nevada face a number of important challenges, including ecologically unhealthy **public** forests....."

"Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada **Public** forestlands are in....."

"Whereas, declining biodiversity with fewer pockets of old growth remaining, fewer snags and downed logs and declining number of hardwoods is also a symptom of declining forest health;" – opinion or fact? Not after a fire, ??

"Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are **may** expected to decline, (*due to lack of management on USFS land*)....."

“Whereas, sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of **timber and** biomass that could be converted to renewable energy, as well as a variety of wood products, including “value added” products, creating an opportunity for locally based (Why limit this?) sustainable economic activity:”

- Identifying, supporting and actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests, and watershed, **economic activity**, protecting habitat.....”

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**John Eaton**

Hi Lynn The board of the Mountain Area Preservation Foundation of Truckee has voted to endorse your resolution. John

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**Keith Logan**

**North Sierra Biomass Utilization Task Force Coordinator**

I think this is something I certainly can support. I will forward it to the group, so they can read it before our next meeting.

At that meeting, we will take a vote. I will push for adoption.

The only line which may be problematic is the "unhealthy forests of our National Lands.." or something like that. I would change that to read more like, "...in spite of the best efforts of our federal forest service, much of our federal controlled forests are in a state of declining health."

This may or may not be true, but it takes the heat off the forest service. They will have to be your biggest ally, so it would be best to shape the narrative in support of the efforts, even if the result has been less than what they envisioned.

Hope to see you on Thursday,  
Best, Keith

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**Kevin Whitlock, MBA**

Under the Trees - Forestry & Environmental Consulting

I agree with almost all of these statements. The 6th paragraph...one could argue that there are "more snags and downed logs" due to insect infestation and density issues which are a direct link to climate change and the absence of low intensity ground fire at regular intervals. Regardless, I offer my support.

Thanks for asking!

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**Kevin Drake**

**Integrated Environmental Restoration Services**

**3/24/2010**

Consider adding a clause that includes maximizing synergy between forest mgmt and watershed restoration. There are many missed opportunities to minimize the import and

export of materials (i.e. woody biomass), thereby minimizing our carbon footprint associated with transportation. Woody biomass can often be utilized near a thinning project as a soil amendment for obliterating/restoring underutilized or problematic dirt roads to increase infiltration and reduce runoff and erosion. Utilization of woody biomass (wood chips) as a soil amendment is a cost-effective way to accomplish the goal of carbon sequestration while reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Watershed restoration opportunities are very often overlooked in the rush to provide feedstock for biomass-to-energy facilities, which don't always pencil out economically or environmentally.

Also, consider adding 'soil quality' to the following goal statement:  
Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon;  
Soil quality is the foundation of healthy forests and watersheds, as well as water supply and quality, as healthy soil provides critical ecosystem functions such as water storage, nutrient cycling, water "treatment," and long-term carbon storage.

Thank you for your consideration.

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**Gary Deardorff  
4/3/2010**

It looks like you initiative is right on track for us in the sierras..I would like to see the proces made easzer for small land owners to do THPs, less expence. When you follow the THP forest pracitce rules it just makes commom sence and good clean up possible. We also need to do every thing to support more bio mas and small local mills. Thanks

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**Jan Bray  
CAL FIRE  
Alpine-Amador-El Dorado-Sacramento Unit  
4/6/2010**

here's my comments.....

### **The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution**

Whereas, the Sierra Nevada Region is California's principal watershed and the origin of 65 percent of the state's developed water supply; serves as one of the state's premiere recreation and tourism destinations for more than 50 million visitor days each year; provides between one-third and one-half of the state's annual timber harvest; produces nearly three-quarters of the state's hydroelectric power; is home to two-thirds of the state's bird and mammal species, half of the state's plant species, and more than 600,000 humans;

Whereas, much of the Sierra Nevada forestlands are in an ecologically unhealthy condition, *particularly* lands *owned* by the federal government;

Whereas, large damaging fires in the Sierra Nevada result in a wide variety of negative impacts including loss of life and property, reduced recreational and tourism opportunities and other significant economic impacts;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in degraded water and air quality, adverse human health impacts, and the loss of *late-seral* stage wildlife habitat;

**DELETE -->** Whereas, declining biodiversity with fewer pockets of old growth remaining, fewer snags and downed logs and declining number of hardwoods is also a symptom of declining forest health;

Whereas, large damaging fires result in the loss of carbon stored in the forests and cause emissions of greenhouse gases, therefore adversely affecting efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change;

**DELETE THIS IS DEBATABLE SCIENCE --->** Whereas, projected increases in temperatures due to a changing climate combined with the unhealthy condition of a significant portion of the forest will result in larger, more frequent and more damaging fires in the future, further exacerbating these impacts;

Whereas, economic conditions in the Sierra continue to show negative trends, even beyond the current national economic conditions, with unemployment rates in many Sierra counties that are significantly higher than the national and state average;

Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;

Whereas, the State of California has established aggressive goals to increase the amount of energy supplied from renewable sources, including biomass energy;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in improved ecological health of forests, including improved habitat conditions and improved water quality;

Whereas sustainable forest management can result in a reliable supply of biomass that could be converted to renewable energy, as well as a variety of wood products, including "value added" products, creating an opportunity for locally based sustainable economic activity;

Therefore, we declare that it is our intent to work collaboratively, constructively and in a transparent manner, with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental entities, to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region by:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will reduce the risk of large damaging fires in our forests and wildlands and in our communities;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in ecologically healthy forests and watersheds, protecting habitat and species, water supply and water and air quality, and the long-term sequestration of carbon;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, biomass energy, biofuels, “value added” wood products, dimensional wood products and the activities necessary to produce these products;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will result in restoration of plant and wildlife habitat stemming from increased resiliency, diversity and species composition post treatment;
- Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in achieving these objectives.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy will coordinate this initiative through the use of a collaborative, inclusive process. Progress will be measured and reported on an ongoing basis.

Signed,

**Jan Bray** CAL FIRE  
Alpine-Amador-El Dorado-Sacramento Unit

---

**Jennifer Montgomery**  
**Placer County Supervisor, District 5**  
**4/6/2010**

Generally I am in support of the statement but want to be assured that fire (controlled burns and some natural Wildland) will continue to be just one of the many tools necessary for forest health and restoration.

---

**Gary Romano,**  
**Director, SVRCD**  
**4/14/2010**

Dear Sirs,

Upon discussion by the Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District's Board of Directors, this letter is our full support for the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative. We feel this is a vital effort needed to help sustain the long-term health of our Sierra Nevada Region.

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy**  
**June 3, 2010**

**Agenda Item VIII**  
**Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative**  
**Attachment C**

Sincerely,

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**Comments on the Draft “Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative”**  
by George Terhune 2/25/10.

First a minor editorial point. In the third Whereas the word should be “result” not “results.” Large damaging fires ... result... .

Second a more substantive though still relatively minor point. In the first Whereas the issue isn't how much of the state's *timber harvest* is produced in the Sierra Nevada, it is how much of the state's *lumber usage* could and should be produced in California and the Sierra Nevada.

Third, and by far most important, is an issue that must be faced straight on but is almost entirely avoided in the draft resolution. This issue isn't really put on the table until the ninth Whereas:

“Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;”

I intend to address only the role of “traditional economic activity related to wood products.” Ranching is a separate issue that others can deal with.

Obviously the most prominent of the traditional activities referred to are logging and sawmills. The clearest reference to those in the resolution itself is where the third bullet paragraph mentions “dimensional wood products.” However, taken as a whole, the resolution recommends *replacing* logging and sawmills, not upgrading, correcting, improving, and adding to those activities and facilities, which I will argue are essential tools for achieving any of the other objectives.

The proposed resolution is more nearly a grab bag of desired results than a logical plan to achieve those results. A logical plan is like a building in that it must rest on a foundation able to support the rest of the structure. The proposed resolution does not rest on any such foundation, unless local communities are expected to accept that more talk and better coordination would do the job. This is doubly unfortunate, because both a foundation that could be made adequate and the means to build adequate structures on it already exist.

The potential foundation consists of the forest-related private workforce and industrial infrastructure where they still exist, or which could be rebuilt where they have been killed off. These could and should provide corrected, expanded, and improved “traditional activities related to wood products.” Rather than accepting the further demise of these essential tools, the resolution should recognize their potential role as the essential foundation, and seek ways to sustain and improve that foundation throughout the Sierra Nevada.

**A. Why are logging and sawmills essential tools?** Let's consider the activities and results required by the resolution and try to pin down why they are not now economically viable, then discuss how they could become so.

**Biomass removal.** Without doubt, biomass removal is an essential element of any successful fuel reduction strategy and of most other watershed and forest health objectives. Unfortunately, very few if any projects that remove only biomass and small diameter trees are capable of recovered their costs. This is mostly because economic viability of these operations is severely limited by transportation costs. This disqualifies an emphasis on biomass removal as the foundation for a Sustainable Sierra Nevada, because it is not possible to attract investment in biomass power plants, or other plants for the "value added" wood products based on biomass and small trees, at close enough spacing to bring transport costs down to a level that can be supported. And raising consumer electricity rates high enough to offset the transportation costs of wider spaced biomass power plants is not a viable remedy on either economic or political grounds. Most if not all of the biomass power plants currently operating are co-located with large sawmills. Others may be still operating in marginal conditions where the original capital costs were previously underwritten by subsidy programs that no longer exist and are not likely to be resurrected. The bottom line is that no potential investor can see a favorable bottom line in building a new stand-alone biomass plant.

**Forest health.** This is not just a question of fuel removal for fire protection, it involves other hazards created by our currently overstocked and overly homogenous forests. These forests are not only mal-adapted to current conditions, they are worse-adapted to survive the climate changes that California has already identified and designated as major impending hazards. The hazards of overstocking will not be cured by removing just biomass and fire ladder trees. The forest's fundamental structure must be made sustainable, which will require removal of some large trees as well as just small trees, since a sustainable structure must be much more patchy and variable. Only a wider variety of forest structures is likely to provide survival habitat for the greatest range of wildlife, since we can't predict what effects climate change will actually cause in either the local or the regional landscape. This restructuring cannot be done at the required pace and scale without having or creating a workforce and industrial infrastructure that would very closely resemble "traditional economic activity related to wood products." Correct that activity, update it and improve it, but don't acquiesce in its further decimation.

**Watershed health.** In the Sierra Nevada this ultimately depends on the protection of the watershed forests from fire, and the creation of forest structures which facilitate the filtration of precipitation into the ground and transpire less water back into the atmosphere. Fortunately there is a good information and experience which says that the same kind of restructuring required for fire protection and forest health will also increase the amount of water absorbed into the ground and reduce the amount transpired. Unfortunately the upper watershed meadow restoration that must accompany these forestry measures, though not very costly, is still not self-supporting. In order to accomplish Meadow restoration projects at the desired pace and scale, methods will have

to be developed to pay for the work, either as part of more general fire protection and forest health measures, or separately on their own merits and value to the beneficiaries.

**Carbon sequestration.** The most effective way to use forests to sequester carbon is not to retain the carbon in large old trees but to populate the forest with the most vigorously growing trees, because these can remove the greatest amount of carbon per acre. Then convert those trees to durable wood products while replacing the removed trees with vigorous new growth. Furthermore, trying to sequester carbon by retaining all the oldest trees creates another major problem. When they eventually die and decompose, the methane produced during decay is many times worse as a greenhouse gas than if the wood were burned in a power plant as mill waste, or disposed of by almost any other means.

**B. How can the foundation workforce and industrial infrastructure be sustained where it still exists and recreated where it has been destroyed?**

As the letter accompanying the Resolution says, the initiative will primarily focus on public land. Almost all of that public land is Federally owned and Forest Service managed. It should be adequately clear by now that the Forest Service cannot on its own create and implement the required corrections of our current and impending situation unless something quite a bit different from “business as usual” can be initiated and sustained. The Regional Forester has said that, in order to meet minimum needs, the current rate of about 100,000 acres per year of active Sierra Nevada national forest management activity must be increased to about 500,000 acres per year. Business as usual simply can’t accomplish anything like that five-fold increase, because the dominant expense of Forest Service projects is in planning and NEPA work which is currently all paid with appropriated funds, and there is no chance of significantly increased appropriations in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, private investment in a workforce and industrial infrastructure capable of implementing the required level of activity throughout the Sierra Nevada can’t be obtained if the availability of logs and biomass from these national forests depends on appropriations that are very likely to change from year to year. You can’t take that situation to a bank or other financial backer with any chance of loan approval.

On the other hand, the Forest Service and other Federal land managers do have available a process that could, with two feasible modifications, make possible a great increase in active management activity and also provide much greater assurance of a reliable supply of forest materials for local mills. The process is called Stewardship Contracting, which can provide two crucial advantages over business as usual. (1) Revenues from sale of federal timber, biomass, and other forest products can become “retained receipts” available for re-investment in other local projects, not returned directly to the Treasury as is otherwise required. And (2) Stewardship Agreements and Stewardship Contracts can be for terms of up to 10 years. The combination of local re-investment authority and relatively long term contracts could go a long way toward stabilizing the supply of raw materials for local mills and other users, thus making possible the needed private investment to support those mills and other facilities. The re-investment can also be in

associated projects that are not themselves self-supporting, such as biomass removal and transport to a power plant at a non-economic distance.

The two required but feasible modifications are: (1) Current federal law does not permit the "retained receipts" from stewardship projects to be considered as "forest receipts" for purposes of computing the 25% County shares. That law could and should be amended, because otherwise the required work simply can't and won't be done. And (2) A Forest Service directive says that "retained receipts" can't be used to support planning, NEPA work, or any other administrative task. Since those functions absorb the great majority of cost to produce the required national forest activities, the current directive must be changed. That is a matter of convincing the Forest Service to untie its own hands, it doesn't require any amendment to federal law.

**Recommendation.** I do not propose to go into detail here as to how a local entity might be organized, negotiate a Stewardship Agreement with the Forest Service, and implement it in a way that would give the necessary results. However, I do believe that the proposed Resolution is fatally deficient in its tacit acceptance of the assumption that further decline in traditional economic activity related to wood products is inevitable, and in its failure to see that nothing else is capable of becoming a viable foundation on which to build the necessary structures of technical and financial support to get the job done at adequate pace and scale. My recommendation is that full acceptance of logging and sawmills should be built into the resolution and its explanatory documents right from the beginning. If the Conservancy is serious about "Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in these objectives," it can do no less.

# Quincy Library Group

939 Bucks Lake Road  
Quincy, CA 95971

April 15, 2010

Mr. Bob Kingman  
Mt. Lassen Program Manger  
Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
2950 Riverside Drive  
Susanville, CA 96130

**Subject: Comments on the Draft “Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative”**

Dear Mr. Kingman,

Our major concern about the Draft Initiative arises most prominently in the ninth Whereas:

“Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;”

Our comments will address only the role of “traditional economic activity related to wood products.” Ranching is a separate issue that should be treated on its own merits, and the need for diversifying local economies and protecting other activities would best be underscored by giving them a Whereas of their own.

Obviously the most prominent of the traditional activities referred to are logging and sawmills. Taken as a whole, the resolution recommends *replacing* logging and sawmills, not upgrading, correcting, improving, and adding to those activities and facilities, which we will argue are essential tools for achieving any of the Initiative’s other objectives.

In general the proposed resolution is more nearly a grab bag of desired results than a logical plan to achieve those results. A logical plan is like a building in that it must rest on a foundation able to support the rest of the structure. The proposed resolution does not rest on any such foundation, unless local communities are expected to accept that more talk and better coordination would do the job. This is doubly unfortunate, because both a foundation that could be made adequate and the means to build adequate structures on it already exist.

The potential foundation consists of the forest-related private workforce and industrial infrastructure where they still exist, or which could be rebuilt where they have been killed off. These could and should provide corrected, expanded, and improved “traditional activities related to wood products.” Rather than accepting the further demise of these essential tools, the resolution should recognize their potential role as the essential foundation, and seek ways to sustain and improve that foundation throughout the Sierra Nevada.

Suggested replacement for the 9<sup>th</sup> Whereas:

“Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products has declined below a level that can rebuild and support the work force and industrial infrastructure that are essential tools for the fuel reduction and other restoration work urgently required to make Sierra Nevada forests safe and sustainable;”

Furthermore, in order to make clear the foundation role that must be played by “traditional wood products,” we suggest that “dimensional wood products” should be brought forward in the list of activities in the third bullet of the resolution:

- Identifying, supporting and implementing actions that will create ecologically and economically sustainable local jobs and economic activity resulting directly and indirectly from sustainable forest management activities, including but not limited to, dimensional wood products, biomass energy, biofuels, “value added” wood products, and the activities necessary to produce these products;

**A. Why are logging and sawmills essential tools?** Let’s consider the activities and results required by the resolution and try to pin down why they are not now economically viable, then discuss how they could become so.

**Biomass removal.** Without doubt, biomass removal is an essential element of any successful fuel reduction strategy and of most other watershed and forest health objectives. Unfortunately, very few if any projects that remove only biomass and small diameter trees are capable of recovered their costs. This is mostly because economic viability of these operations is severely limited by transportation costs. This disqualifies an emphasis on biomass removal as the foundation for a Sustainable Sierra Nevada, because it is not possible to attract investment in biomass power plants, or other plants for the “value added” wood products based on biomass and small trees, at close enough spacing to bring transport costs down to a level that can be supported. And raising consumer electricity rates high enough to offset the transportation costs of wider spaced biomass power plants is not a viable remedy on either economic or political grounds. Most if not all of the biomass power plants currently operating are co-located with large sawmills. Others may be still operating in marginal conditions where the original capital costs were previously underwritten by subsidy programs that no longer exist and are not likely to be resurrected. The bottom line is that no potential investor can see a favorable bottom line in building a new stand-alone biomass plant.

**Forest health.** This is not just a question of fuel removal for fire protection, it involves other hazards created by our currently overstocked and overly homogenous forests. These forests are not only mal-adapted to current conditions, they are worse-adapted to survive the climate changes that California has already identified and designated as major impending hazards. The hazards of overstocking will not be cured by removing just biomass and fire ladder trees. The forest’s fundamental structure must be made sustainable, which will require removal of some large trees as well as just small trees, since a sustainable structure must be much more patchy and variable. Furthermore, only a wider variety of forest structures is likely to provide survival habitat for the greatest range of wildlife, since we can’t predict what effects climate change will actually cause in either the local or the regional landscape. This restructuring cannot be done at the

required pace and scale without having or creating a workforce and industrial infrastructure that would very closely resemble “traditional economic activity related to wood products.” Correct that activity, update it and improve it, but don’t acquiesce in its further decimation.

**Watershed health.** In the Sierra Nevada this ultimately depends on the protection of the watershed forests from fire, the creation of forest structures which facilitate the filtration of precipitation into the ground and transpire less water back into the atmosphere, and storage of water in upland meadows for the attenuation of peak floods and the release of cooler late-season water. Fortunately there is a good information and experience which says that the same kind of restructuring required for fire protection and forest health will also help produce these other watershed benefits. Unfortunately the upper watershed meadow restoration that must accompany these forestry measures, though not very costly, is still not self-supporting. In order to accomplish Meadow restoration projects at the desired pace and scale, methods will have to be developed to pay for the work, either as part of more general fire protection and forest health measures, or separately on their own merits and value to the beneficiaries.

**Carbon sequestration.** Retaining carbon in large, old, slow-growing trees is not the most efficient use of the land, even if the only goal were to sequester carbon. Instead, a forest managed for more vigorous growth, a significant part of which is converted to durable wood products as the trees mature, will sequester more carbon overall. The wood products store carbon off site, making room for optimal growth and more efficient carbon uptake. And converting mill waste to power replaces fossil fuel that would otherwise be added to the total carbon load. Furthermore, an over-stock of old trees will increase the number of them that eventually die and decompose, and the methane produced during decay is many times worse as a greenhouse gas than if that wood were milled, burned in a power plant as mill waste, or disposed of by almost any other means.

**B. How can the foundation workforce and industrial infrastructure be sustained where it still exists and recreated where it has been destroyed?**

As the letter accompanying the Resolution says, the initiative will primarily focus on public land. Almost all of that public land is Federally owned and Forest Service managed. It should be adequately clear by now that the Forest Service cannot on its own create and implement the required corrections of our current and impending problems unless something quite a bit different from “business as usual” can be initiated and sustained. The Regional Forester has said that, in order to meet minimum needs, the current rate of about 100,000 acres per year of active Sierra Nevada national forest management activity must be increased to about 500,000 acres per year. Business as usual simply can’t accomplish anything like that five-fold increase, because the dominant expense of Forest Service projects is in planning and NEPA work which is currently all paid with appropriated funds, and there is no chance of significantly increased appropriations in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, private investment in a workforce and industrial infrastructure capable of implementing the required level of activity throughout the Sierra Nevada can’t be obtained if the availability of logs and biomass from these national forests depends on appropriations that are very likely to change from

year to year. You can't take that situation to a bank or other financial backer with any chance of loan approval.

On the other hand, the Forest Service and other Federal land managers do have available a process that could, with two feasible modifications, make possible a great increase in active management activity and also provide much greater assurance of a reliable supply of forest materials for local mills. The process is called Stewardship Contracting, which can provide two crucial advantages over business as usual. (1) Revenues from sale of federal timber, biomass, and other forest products can become "retained receipts" available for re-investment in other local projects, not returned directly to the Treasury as is otherwise required. And (2) Stewardship Agreements and Stewardship Contracts can be for terms of up to 10 years. The combination of local re-investment authority and relatively long term contracts could go a long way toward stabilizing the supply of raw materials for local mills and other users, thus making possible the needed private investment to support those mills and other facilities. The re-investment can also be in associated projects that are not themselves self-supporting, such as biomass removal and transport of biomass to a power plant at a non-economic distance.

The two required but feasible modifications are: (1) Current federal law does not permit the "retained receipts" from stewardship projects to be considered as "forest receipts" for purposes of computing the 25% County shares. That law could and should be amended, because otherwise the required work simply can't and won't be done. And (2) A Forest Service directive says that "retained receipts" can't be used to support planning, NEPA work, or any other administrative task. Since those functions absorb a very large part of the cost to support the required national forest activities, the current directive must be changed. That is a matter of convincing the Forest Service to untie its own hands, it doesn't require any amendment to federal law.

**Recommendation.** We do not propose to go into detail here as to how a local entity might be organized, negotiate Stewardship Contracts with the Forest Service, and implement them in a way that would give the necessary results. However, we do believe that the proposed Resolution is fatally deficient in its tacit acceptance of the assumption that further decline in traditional economic activity related to wood products is inevitable, and in its failure to see that nothing else is capable of becoming a viable foundation on which to build the necessary structures of technical and financial support to get the fuel reduction and other forest health work done at adequate pace and scale. Our recommendation is that full acceptance of logging and sawmills should be built into the resolution and its explanatory documents right from the beginning. If the Conservancy is serious about "Identifying, supporting and implementing policies, investment and technical support that will assist in these objectives," it can do no less.

Sincerely,



George Terhune  
Co-Corresponding Secretary



Officers

Jeff Darlington, President  
Ben Miles, Vice President  
Bill Thauvette, Secretary-  
Treasurer

Member Land Trusts

American Land Conservancy  
American River Conservancy  
California Rangeland Trust  
Eastern Sierra Land Trust  
Feather River Land Trust  
Lassen Land & Trails Trust  
Mother Lode Land Trust  
Nevada County Land Trust  
Nevada Land Conservancy  
Pacific Forest Trust  
Placer Land Trust  
Sequoia Riverlands Trust  
Shasta Land Trust  
Sierra Foothills Conservancy  
The Nature Conservancy  
Truckee Donner Land Trust  
Trust for Public Land  
Tuolumne County Land Trust  
Wildflowers Forever

At-Large Members:

Bill Thauvette  
Sahara Saude

Coordinator

Susan Kane

April 23, 2010

Jim Branham  
Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
11521 Blocker Drive, #205  
Auburn, CA 95603

Re: Letter of Support for Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative

Dear Jim:

The Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council and its member groups work to protect and sustain the Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountain regions by working with willing landowners and conservation partners to permanently protect important resource lands within this region.

The Council recognizes the critical importance of protecting existing resources—our water sources, farm and ranch lands, forests and wildlife habitat. The Council also recognizes the importance of addressing potential threats to these resources. Protection and sound management of these resources are the keys to the economic well being of the Sierra Nevada.

Therefore, the Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council hereby supports the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative being proposed by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, an effort that is compatible and complimentary to the Council's activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JD", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jeff Darlington  
President

# Plumas County Economic Recovery Committee

*"To enhance Plumas County's economic vitality through our natural resources"*

---

March 31, 2010

Ken George  
Business Owner

Dick Hathaway, CEO,  
Plumas District  
Hospital

Traci Holt  
Alliance for Workforce  
Development

John Kimmel  
Certified Public  
Accountant

Mark Lathrop  
Sierra Pacific  
Industries

Chuck Leonhardt  
Plumas Tax Assessor

Bob Marshall  
Plumas-Sierra  
Rural Elec. Co.

Jim Murphy  
Portola  
City Administrator

Doug Self,  
CEO,  
Seneca Health Care

John Sheehan  
QLG Member; Plumas  
Corp. Director

Lori Simpson  
County Supervisor

Mike Taborski  
Publisher,  
Feather Publishing

Ron Taylor  
President, Feather  
River College

Sherrie Thrall  
County Supervisor

Jeff Titcomb  
Indian Valley  
Chamber

Bill Wickman  
Consultant,  
American Forest  
Resource Council

Mike Wood  
Union Rep.,  
CIC, UBC,  
QLG member

Mr. Bob Kingman  
Mt. Lassen Program Manger  
Sierra Nevada Conservancy

RE: The Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative

Dear Mr. Kingman:

The Plumas County Economic Recovery Committee (PCERC) wishes to comment on the Initiative stated above. PCERC's main goal is to work at the State and Federal level to bring regulatory reform to restore our forests, watersheds and wildlife while maintaining the existing timber production infrastructure. By meeting this objective, the PCERC also recognizes the additional benefit that thinning to improve forest health provides to our watersheds and furthering our efforts in protecting our natural resources from catastrophic wildfires. PCERC has representatives of local elected officials, county services, education, small and large businesses, real estate, chambers of commerce, hospitals, local utilities, organized labor, news service, city management, timber industry and citizens at large. PCERC's mission statement is; Enhance Plumas Counties Economic Vitality through our Natural Resources.

Within the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Initiative is a proposed Resolution. One of the "Whereas" statements within the proposed Resolution presents a concern for the PCERC. The statement we would like to address is;

**Whereas, traditional economic activity related to wood products and ranching are expected to continue to decline, underscoring the need to diversify local economies while protecting recreation and tourism and other existing activities;**

PCERC is very concerned about this statement. It reflects the misunderstanding of how critical it is for our rural counties to maintain our forest products infrastructure. Without a viable forest products infrastructure, most of the other statements within your Resolution could not be achieved. Sawmills and bio-mass co-generation facilities are the key to economically accomplish the restoration of our forests and watersheds while improving our wildlife populations and reducing acres lost to catastrophic wildfires. There may be opportunity for adding to the existing infrastructure with additional diverse forest

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109 Cottonwood Ct., Quincy, Calif. 95971  
530-283-0973

products facilities such as home or commercial pellets. However, the assumption that “diversifying local economies” means that new business ventures outside forest products will replace this existing infrastructure has not proven to be the case.

In 2009 mill closures in Plumas County heightened our concern and need to address the issues surrounding the economic and social impacts when these closures occur. We have lost 150 jobs with the small log closure in Quincy and an additional 39 employees due to dropping a shift at the Collins Pine Company mill in Chester. It is not only these immediate job losses, but the additional 1.6 associated jobs within our business communities. There are also known longer term impacts of such job losses, such as the closure of a local hospital that occurred in 2007 and the very real prospect that some area communities are facing school closures due to declining enrollment.

This loss of infrastructure in Plumas County as a consequence of timber and forest management policies is often overlooked by many. However, the issue is also of high importance to the whole State of California. Plumas County is the location of the Feather River watershed. The Feather River is the key watershed for the State Water Project which delivers approximately 70 percent of the water serving more than 25 million Californians. As a result of the increase in acres lost to wildfire, the growing inability of the soils and vegetation to hold back sediment is negatively impacting water quality as well as adding sediment to the Feather River that is impacting fisheries and the hydro-electric facilities of PG&E.

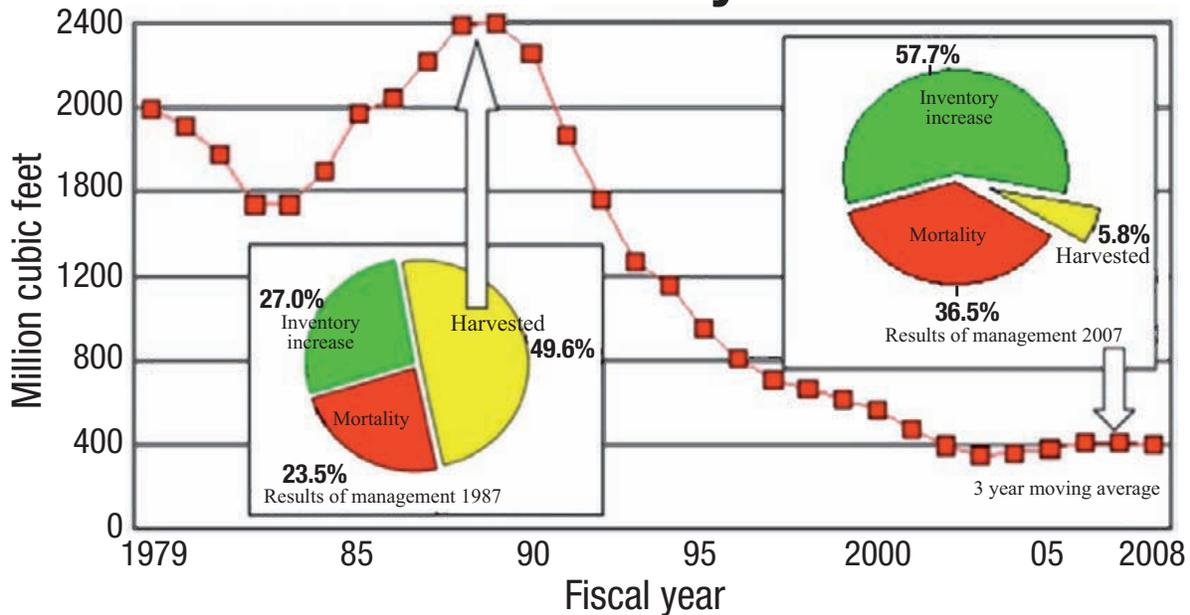
When you are considering discussions on keeping or replacing forest products infrastructure, it is important to take into consideration what these jobs mean to our rural economic and social wellbeing. Forest workers and the related jobs that this infrastructure provide are all high paying jobs. Instead of trying to replace this job sector, you should consider how to increase the needed acres treated to restore, enhance and stabilize our county’s natural resources and forest products infrastructure. With the emphasis on job creation that is occurring nationally, the following information should be used to emphasize the importance of this effort to revitalize and maintain this economic opportunity.

When looking at forest related jobs and economics, 1 million board feet of harvest equates to 11.4 new direct and indirect jobs with an average annual wage of \$43,200 per job. I am sure this is low for California, but those statistics were from Oregon Department of Forestry. Also statistics from the US Agriculture Department showed that for every \$1 million invested in forestry projects 37.2 jobs were created. Historically, the Plumas National Forest used to have an annual harvest of 180-200 million board feet per year. With all of the current laws and regulations, that figure has fallen to between 40-50 million board feet per year.

If there is a concern that projects are over-cutting our National Forest and causing environmental harm by removing small and intermediate trees, then you should consider the following information.

# Timber cut, historic trend

## National Forest system lands



There are two points on the graph, both designated with arrows, which will be discussed. The first arrow highlights the peak of NFS annual harvest as well as the beginning of the impact of the Spotted Owl controversy. The corresponding pie graph sets an interesting baseline. Even though the annual timber harvest has peaked, only one half of the annual growth was being harvested and one-quarter of the annual growth was actually being added to the timber inventory. The second pie graph shows the impact of a forest policy that reduced the annual harvest to 1/6th of what it had been. The result is that less than 6% of growth is being harvested annually, while 58% is being added to inventory and a staggering 36.5% of annual growth is dying! We are growing trees for bugs and fire.

To put this on a local base in Plumas County, the 2009 Forest Service, Region 5, Westcore Tables state for the Plumas National Forest;

There is an annual net growth of 1,134.0 million board feet (mmbf)  
 Annual mortality is 66.5 mmbf which represents 6% of net growth  
 Volume sold in 2009 was 33.77 mmbf which represents 3.0% of net growth.

Again, PCERC wants to emphasize the importance of revitalizing and maintaining our forest products infrastructure in order to accomplish your other objectives that you have outlined in the Sustainable Sierra Nevada Resolution. If there is a change in the wording of the "Whereas" discussed above, PCERC supports the Resolution.

If we can be of assistance with your efforts we would enjoy the opportunity to work with the Conservancy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Wickman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Wickman, Chairman

Cc:

Senator Cox

Senator Aanestad

Assemblyman Logue

Assemblyman Nielsen

Lori Simpson, Plumas County Supervisor

Sherri Thrall, Plumas County Supervisor

Bill Nunes, Sierra County Supervisor

Tim Beals, Sierra County

Steve Brink, California Forestry Association

Frank Stewart, QLG County Forester

Tom Partin, American Forest Resource Council

## **Background**

At the March Board Meeting, the Board was provided an update on continuing discussions with the Pacific Forest and Watershed Land Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) and the implementation of their Land Conservation Program. Discussions have continued for several months regarding the potential Roles that the SNC might play in helping the Stewardship Council to implement the Land Conservation Plan in perpetuity.

At the September meeting, the Chair appointed Boardmembers McQuiston and Brissenden to serve as a Board committee to guide staff on this matter. The committee members have been apprised of the current status and have discussed this with staff prior to this meeting.

## **Current Status**

Staff continues to discuss the proposals with the Stewardship Council to further clarify issues of concern and define Roles. The Stewardship Council has suggested that the following roles are of highest priority for them, and that certain of these are timelier now than others.

### **Priority One Roles**

- Approve successor conservation easement holders in the event it is necessary.
- Serve as temporary back-up holder of conservation easements until SNC identifies new conservation easement holder.
- Serve as repository of land management plans, baseline condition reports, and conservation easement holder annual monitoring reports.
- Review and/or approve amendments to management plans.
- Covenant holder and monitor when USFS is a donee of fee title.
- As alternative to covenant holder, approver of a successor covenant holder.
- Approve successor fee title holders as necessary.

### **Priority Two Role**

- Monitor/assess the economic and physical impacts of the Land Conservation Commitment. The plan to monitor the economic and physical impacts of the land conservation program dispositions will be defined so that the plan can be described with some specificity in the Land Conservation and Conveyance Plan for the Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit that will likely be presented to the Stewardship Council board for approval in late 2010.

### Priority Three Role

- Serve as a successor to the Stewardship Council accepting assignment of Council's contractual rights.

Generally speaking, staff believes the "suite" of roles that have been identified are appropriate for the SNC to assume, provided, 1) an adequate funding mechanism can be identified, 2) specific language can be developed to clearly identify the SNC's role, and 3) the SNC fully understands potential liability in assuming such roles. The role of a Covenant holder for the USFS fee title donations remains the most difficult to fully define at this time and is still being reviewed and analyzed by the Stewardship Council and the SNC in coordination with the USFS.

A draft Scope of Work addressing the Priority One roles has been prepared by SNC staff and provided to the Stewardship Council staff (see Attachment A). At this time we are awaiting feedback from the Council as to whether this reflects a common understanding of the roles. Staff is currently developing a Draft Worksheet for Calculating Costs in consultation with the SNC Board Committee.

SNC Staff has discussed a couple of ways to ensure that financial resources would be available in perpetuity for costs associated with the tasks and roles. We have looked at the possibility of setting up a **Special Deposit Fund** under the provisions of the State Administration Manual Chapter 18000; allows deposits to be made outside of the normal Treasury funds. We have also looked at a direct reimbursement from an **independent trust fund** that would pay for tasks as they were completed and necessary – but would not be under the Conservancy's direct control. No decision on the best method has been determined as yet, however, it is understood that the roles the SNC would play would be entirely funded through the Stewardship Council's endowment.

### Next Steps

We are continuing to explore the feasibility of SNC performing the tasks associated with the Roles as they are currently defined. A draft timeline has been developed that should result in a formal recommendation as to the SNC role(s) at the September Board meeting. Staff will continue to seek guidance and direction from the Board committee members and bring any formal agreement to this Board for approval.

### Draft Timeline:

**May 1- June 30, 2010:** Reach tentative agreement on role definition for Priority One, present proposal to Stewardship Council board meeting on June 30, 2010.

**September 1, 2010:** Assuming tentative agreement on roles is reached and proposal is accepted by Stewardship Council board, present proposal and recommendation to SNC Board for action.

**September 1 – October 30, 2010:** Consider Priority Two and Three Role, present to Stewardship Council board.

**December 1, 2010:** Present recommendation for Priority Two and Three Role to SNC Board for action.

### **Recommendation**

**This is an information item only at this time; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments regarding the appropriateness of SNC performing the roles discussed above and as shown in the attached Scope of Work.**

## Attachment A

**DRAFT SUBMITTAL** – This draft scope of work has been prepared by the SNC and is intended for review by the Stewardship Council and the SNC Board. It is not intended to be adopted as prepared, but to serve as a starting point to build terms agreeable to both parties. The SNC has not agreed to play any of the roles identified below at this time.

### **Scope of Work**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy agrees to perform the following Roles in support of the Pacific Forest & Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (SC) implementation of the Land Conservation Plan adopted in November 2007; and pursuant to the framework and management objectives for the permanent protection of more than 140,000 acres of PG&E watershed lands.

1. The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) agrees to act as a temporary holder of conservation easements in the event of dissolution of the conservation holder or other events removing the CE holder. The SNC will seek a new conservation holder and is authorized to name such party upon consultation with fee title owner.
2. The SNC will approve successor conservation easement holders in the event that the exiting CE holder has selected a willing successor qualified to hold the conservation easement. In the event a successor entity is not identified by the exiting CE holder, SNC is authorized to name a successor CE holder, upon consultation with the fee title owner.
3. The SNC will review and may, at its discretion, comment on amendments to management plans for transferred properties.
4. The SNC will review proposed successor fee title holder ,and may approve after consultation with CE holder
5. The SNC agrees to act as a Covenant Holder for lands that are transferred to United States Forest Service through donation from the SC. As a Covenant Holder, the SNC will be responsible for the monitoring of donated lands per the Covenants and Conditions set out in the USFS Conservation Covenant.
6. The SNC may act as a repository for land management plans associated with donated conservation easements, baseline condition reports and conservation easement holder annual monitoring reports. Reports and Management Plans would be kept in an electronic format and made available to the public through the SNC Web site.

## Attachment A

### Expenses

These services will be provided in perpetuity to support the on-going implementation of the Stewardship Council Program identified in the Land Conservation Plan and the Settlement Agreement provided the costs to administer these services do not exceed the interest earned or accumulated on the principle amount deposited in a Special Deposit Fund. The SC will deposit an initial sum of \_\_\_\_\_ in a Special Deposit Fund which will earn an amount of interest to cover the all actual costs of providing the tasks described in items 1 through 6 above, including direct costs (salary and benefits) and in-direct costs including operating expenses and contract costs for special technical skills (Legal Review, scientific expertise, etc.). In the event that actual costs exceed the amount of available interest earned on initial deposit, the SNC will not be responsible for carrying out the identified tasks until such funds are available to cover costs necessary to resolve the issues.

In the event that the Special Deposit Fund accumulates an excess of XX% of the initial investment from interest earned, and it is determined by the SNC that such funds are not needed to carry out the duties described in 1 through 6 above, the excess may be made available for loans to eligible entities by the SNC consistent with SC direction and the SNC's enabling statute.

SNC will be reimbursed for incurred costs through debits made from a Special Deposit Fund established according to the State of California State Administrative Manual, Section \_\_\_\_\_. Initial deposit to this fund will be made by the SC in the amount specified above as NTE \_\_\_\_\_. The SNC will make debits to this account at its discretion to fund work completed.