

# Board Meeting MINUTES

December 5 – 6, 2018  
California Department of  
Food & Agriculture – Auditorium  
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



## DECEMBER 5, 2018

1:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.  
(End time is approximate)

### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:17 a.m.

### **II. Roll Call**

#### **December 5, 2018**

Present: Terry O'Brien, Julie Alvis, Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez, Elizabeth Cavasso, Bob Johnston, Jeff Griffiths, Tom Wheeler, Sherri Brennan, John Brissenden, and Doug Teeter

Absent: Randy Fletcher, Danny Wan, Susana Reyes, Bernie Gyant, Este Stifel, and Woody Smeck

#### **December 6, 2018**

Present: Terry O'Brien, Julie Alvis, Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez, Elizabeth Cavasso, Bob Johnston, Jeff Griffiths, Tom Wheeler, Sherri Brennan, John Brissenden, Doug Teeter, Randy Fletcher, and Este Stifel

Absent: Danny Wan, Bernie Gyant, Susana Reyes, and Woody Smeck

### **III. Closed Session (This portion of the meeting is not open to the public.)**

The Board may consider and take appropriate action on issues related to hiring and appointment of the Executive Officer. (Government Code section 11126(a)(1))

### **IV. Recess**

The closed session will recess for the day and will reconvene to continue Board business on the following day, December 6, 2018, at 9:00 a.m.

## DECEMBER 6, 2018

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
(End time is approximate)

### **V. Continuation of Closed Session (This portion of the meeting is not open to the public.)**

The Board may consider and take appropriate action on issues related to hiring and appointment of the Executive Officer. (Government Code section 11126(a)(1))

**RESUME OPEN SESSION AND BOARD CHAIR REPORT OF CLOSED SESSION APPROXIMATELY 1:00 P.M.**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien called the meeting to order and called for a moment of silence in remembrance of the people of Paradise and those who have suffered in this fire.

Board Chair summarized the closed session of the Board that took place the previous day and this morning saying that the Board had met in closed session to conduct interviews for the position of Executive Officer. O'Brien announced that the Board had come to a decision and would be reaching out to the candidates to notify them of the decision on Monday.

**VI. Approval of September 6, 2018, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Randy Fletcher moved, and Boardmember Tom Wheeler seconded, a motion to approve the September 6, 2018, meeting minutes. Boardmember Jeff Griffiths abstained. The motion passed unanimously.**

**VII. Board Chair's Report (ACTION)**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien read Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Resolution No. 12-18-01, honoring Executive Officer Jim Branham for his service to the SNC.

Branham acknowledged his time spent at the SNC, the staff of SNC, and the Board. Branham said that he got to work with a really dedicated, capable, competent group of individuals on this conservancy team – a lot of incredible partners who do great work. "If anything has surprised me when I took this job, it's how many people are out there really doing things to try to make their community and this Region better."

Boardmembers acknowledged Branham, his leadership skills, and the vision he carried out with the SNC.

**ACTION: Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded, a motion to adopt SNC Resolution Number 12-18-01. The motion passed unanimously.**

The signed and framed resolution was presented to Branham on behalf of the SNC Governing Board and the staff at the SNC.

**VIII. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (ACTION)**

Boardmember Sherri Brennan nominated Terry O'Brien for the position of Board Chair.

**ACTION: Boardmember Sherri Brennan moved, and Boardmember Randy Fletcher seconded, a motion to elect Boardmember Terry O'Brien as the 2019 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Chair. The motion passed unanimously.**

Boardmember Doug Teeter nominated Sherri Brennan for the position of Board Vice Chair.

**ACTION: Boardmember Doug Teeter moved, and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded, a motion to elect Boardmember Sherri Brennan as the 2019 Sierra Nevada Conservancy Board Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously.**

**IX. 2019 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)**

Executive Officer Jim Branham provided a brief background for the proposed 2019 Board meeting schedule.

**ACTION: Boardmember Randy Fletcher moved, and Boardmember Tom Wheeler seconded, a motion to approve the proposed 2019 Board meeting schedule. The motion passed unanimously.**

**X. Final Strategic and Action Plans (ACTION)**

Policy and Outreach Division Chief Angela Avery provided a presentation for the proposed final version of the 2019 to 2024 Strategic and Action Plans, saying that the Strategic Plan will guide the Conservancy through 2024 and that the Action Plan will guide staff activities through the end of June 2020.

These plans elevate the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) as the overarching umbrella program, under which all other SNC programs will operate. They have been written to recognize the organizational strengths of the SNC and help identify ongoing roles. They've also been written open-ended enough to allow for shifts and response to contemporary urgent issues or changes that may demand new focus from the SNC.

Avery acknowledged the guidance from the Board and from SNC's partners whose perspectives have been key in developing the Regional goals and the first year's actions.

Because the draft plans were finalized before the full impacts of the Camp Fire were known, Avery asked the Board whether staff should reevaluate the Action Plan. Additionally, Avery stated that because Proposition 3 was not approved by

voters, a number of actions identified in the plan may need to be implemented at adjusted levels. Finally, she noted that any changes to the Strategic Plan must come through the Board.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation surrounding the questions proposed by Avery and questioned the flexibility to update and modify this plan as time goes on. Avery advised the Board that the Action Plan is a working document and that it could be updated to meet the needs of the Region.

Avery told the Board that staff would take the approved plans and immediately start implementing actions and would provide progress updates at future meetings.

#### **Public Comments:**

**Jason Christian, Plumas Corporation** – Addressed the Board with an update on activities on the Plumas County forests. Christian highlighted the collaborative work being done in this community, asked that the Board consider continued partnerships with these collaboratives, and highlighted the failure of the Loyalton Cogen plant which is failing due to the gaps in policy.

**Jim Cramer** – Cramer said he is a member of the Sierra Club but is not representing the Sierra Club with his public comments. Cramer highlighted the importance of addressing structure safety when related to wildfire danger. He also asked that the SNC emphasize small trees and shrubbery in forest treatment. Cramer also provided comment on post-fire response and management practices.

**ACTION: Boardmember Randy Fletcher moved, and Boardmember Brissenden seconded, a motion to approve the SNC 2019-2023 Strategic Plan Securing California’s Environmental and Economic Future: Protecting and Restoring the Health and Resilience of Sierra Nevada Watersheds and Communities, and its companion 2019-2020 Action Plan, for implementation beginning January 1, 2019. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **XI. Proposition 68 Grant Guidelines (ACTION)**

Executive Officer Jim Branham outlined that the grant guidelines were developed with the intent of supporting the SNC’s new Strategic Plan and explained the SNC’s desire to expand its grant program beyond a forest health focus.

Grant Program Coordinator Shannon Ciotti provided background on SNC’s grant funds and an overview of the new guidelines submitted to the Board for approval for the Strategic Land Conservation, Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, and Vibrant Recreation and Tourism grant programs. Ciotti outlined the goals, funding amounts available, and timelines for each program.

Boardmembers discussed each of the programs with specific focus on funding levels and evaluation criteria. Boardmembers also discussed and agreed to incorporating a preference for funding working landscapes in the evaluation criteria for the Strategic Land Conservation program, and to clarifying the amounts available under each program.

#### **Actions**

- a. **The Board may consider and approve Grant Guidelines for the Strategic Land Conservation Proposition 68 grant program and authorize staff to take the necessary steps to implement the program.**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Jeff Griffiths moved, and Boardmember Tom Wheeler seconded, a motion to approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Land Conservation Grant Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program with up to \$8,000,000 of Proposition 68 funds appropriated to SNC for Fiscal Year 2018-2019, with the proposed addition of working landscapes as a favorable condition listed on page six of the Land Conservation Grant Guidelines. The motion passed unanimously.

- b. **The Board may consider and approve Grant Guidelines for the Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Proposition 68 grant program and authorize staff to take the necessary steps to implement the program.**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Bob Johnston moved, and Boardmember Elizabeth Cavasso seconded, a motion to approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Grant Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program with no less than \$1,675,000 of Proposition 68 funds appropriated to SNC for Fiscal Year 2018-2019. The motion passed unanimously.

- c. **The Board may consider and approve Grant Guidelines for the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Proposition 68 grant program and authorize staff to take the necessary steps to implement the program.**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Jeff Griffiths moved, and Boardmember Randy Fletcher seconded, a motion to approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Grant Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program with no less than \$1,000,000 of Proposition 68 funds appropriated to SNC for Fiscal Year 2018-2019. The motion passed unanimously.

**XII. Timber Regulation and Forest Restoration Fund (TRFRF) Grant Award Recommendation (ACTION)**

Elissa Brown, Fund Development Coordinator, provided a brief overview and presentation to the Board. Brown said the SNC was allocated \$1 million from the state TRFRF in Fiscal Year 2018/19. She explained the purpose of this funding is to provide grants to serve as seed funding for activities such as mill site redevelopment, mass timber manufacturing, work force development, and other wood product-related businesses within the Sierra Nevada Region.

Brown asked the Board to consider a grant award of \$250,000 to provide pre-development funding in the form of pre-engineering for a Forest Biomass Business Center located in Yuba County. Brown identified the potential grantee as the Camptonville Community Partnership, a rural nonprofit community organization, which is leading the development of this center in partnership with Phoenix Energy, the Yuba Water Agency, the site landowner, and other local agencies.

Brown reported that this project has received several grants but still lacks the funding to complete the pre-development preliminary engineering work. One of the grants it has received is a \$5 million California Energy Commission Grant which will not be able to be implemented unless this pre-engineering is done.

Brown explained the Forest Biomass Business Center, including the bioenergy plant, is a high priority for the communities in that region and will provide desperately needed means of disposing of forest biomass residuals and reducing wildfire risk. It also will promote public safety, reduce uncontrolled air emissions from pile burning, restore forest and watershed health, protect water supply, and produce renewable base load energy. The Forest Biomass Business Center and its power generation facility will also boost the local economy through job creation and related activities.

Brown noted that the proposed project fits the objectives of the Timber Regulation Forest Restoration Fund and that SNC staff recommend funding the project with this funding source.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation about the critical need for projects like this one. Other discussions also took place regarding additional funding for this project, particularly relating to the California Energy Commission (CEC) funds allocated for the project. Brown provided clarification, stating that the \$5 million of CEC funding has been allocated and appropriated for the project, but it is her understanding that there are certain conditions the appropriation is dependent on.

## **Public Comment**

**Regine Miller, Bioenergy Project Manager for Camptonville Community Partnership** – Miller spoke to the Board about the Camptonville Community Project, stating that this is “very much a community driven project.”

Miller indicated that the project is one of the leading community-scale bioenergy projects in the state of California. Miller also said that the project is critical to the Region and thanked the Board for their consideration.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Randy Fletcher seconded, a motion to authorize a grant award to the Camptonville Community Partnership in the amount of \$250,000, and further authorize the staff to enter into the necessary agreements to move forward with this project. The motion passed unanimously.

*Due to time constraints and the number of individuals who have requested to make public comment on Agenda Item XIVd, Board Chair Terry O’Brien rearranged the agenda to accommodate presentations and public comment. The final agenda items were heard in the following order: Agenda Item XIII, XV, XIV, XVI, and XVII. O’Brien requested that all public comment be kept to two minutes per speaker.*

### **XIII. Annual Report (ACTION)**

Policy and Outreach Division Chief Angela Avery provided the Board an overview of the printed Annual Report (hard-copy provided to the Board for review). Avery reminded the Board that the document is intended to be a promotional piece that covers calendar year 2018, and that it is linked by design to the Strategic and Action Plans approved earlier.

Avery stated that, in addition to the promotional component there, the SNC has a statutory requirement to report to the Legislature on SNC fiscal expenditures, land management costs, and administrative costs. She said the Administrative Services Budget Unit is preparing a letter that will be submitted to the secretary of California Natural Resources Agency as well as the legislature no later than December 31, 2018, per that requirement.

Board Chair Terry O’Brien requested a deadline for Boardmember feedback. Avery confirmed that the deadline for feedback would be the beginning of the following week, December 12.

**ACTION: Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Doug Teeter seconded, a motion to approve the attached 2018 Annual Report and direct staff to take the necessary actions for its successful distribution. The motion passed unanimously.**

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

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Jim Branham acknowledged the Board and reflected on his time as SNC's first Executive Officer. Branham also acknowledged the team that works to put together SNC's Board meetings and the staff that continues to inform good policy by staying on top of current science.

b. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Division Chief Amy Lussier reported on facility improvements and fleet upgrades and announced the hiring of Andrea Williams and Amy Nelson. Lussier also highlighted the Good Neighbor Agreement the SNC recently signed with the United States Forest Service.

c. Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Update

Mandy Vance, WIP Coordinator, provided WIP program status update. Vance indicated that staff is turning its attention to updating messaging in light of the expansion of the WIP as SNC's overarching program and will be looking at how to best utilize SNC's partnerships to realize the full potential of the Program.

Vance provided updates on a couple of items not included in the WIP Staff Report. Starting with the Sierra Nevada Strategic Investment Plan, Vance shared that the group is meeting regularly and had finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a number of state agencies. Vance noted that the MOU is out for signatures and was expected to be finalized by the end of the year. Due to the growing interest in this group, the MOU was left open-ended so that additional signatories could be added going forward.

Vance acknowledged Board Chair Terry O'Brien and Boardmember Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez' involvement in the effort and noted the addition of Caltrans and United States Forest Service (USFS) Region 5 at the next meeting.

Vance announced that USFS Region 5 announced that the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative was the recipient of this year's Regional Forester's Award for the All-lands, Watershed, and Forest Health Projects category, and SNC and Jim Branham were nominated and awarded for Partnership of the Year.

d. Policy and Outreach Update

Policy and Outreach Division Chief Angela Avery directed the Board to prepared meeting materials and provided a status report on current events related to Policy and Outreach. Avery reported that in mid-November, SNC staff



convened an all-day meeting with scientists from the USDA Pacific Southwest Research Station and university researchers to discuss recent science around forest and watershed health, the challenges that the state faces on how to accomplish forest restoration goals, how to translate science into policy goals, and the ways that science can inform forest restoration decisions.

Avery noted a key legislative development with the introduction of SB 45 (Ben Allen). This is a new bond measure addressing wildfire, drought, and flood protection and climate resilience across the state. Staff is tracking the bill's progress and will report status in future meetings.

Avery also told the Board that with the passage of AB 2849, SNC is working on recruiting out-of-Region Assembly and Senate legislative liaisons. Senator Ben Allen, who is the author of SB-45, will be contacted to see if he has interest in taking that out-of-Region legislative liaison position. On the assembly side, staff is talking with Assembly Member Mark Stone who coauthored AB 2849.

Staff is working with Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry's office. They've expressed interest in doing a legislative briefing for legislative staff and others around the concept of biomass and infrastructure in the state.

Avery provided a Communications update to the Board. Avery said that staff continues to monitor and share relevant research and to track current events and report on them via our social media accounts. SNC was particularly focused on sharing official and credible updates during the Camp Fire.

O'Brien requested that a meeting be scheduled with SNC staff to discuss these recent legislative issues.

### **Public Comment**

The following members of the public addressed the Board and expressed concerns and opposition to work being done in the Rim Fire area. Several individuals also opposed biomass projects and current logging practices in the area.

Greg Sherr

Daniel Barad, Sierra Club CA

Gary Hughes

Douglas Bevington, Forest Director, Leonardo DeCaprio Foundation

Ara Marderosian, Sequoia Forest Keeper

Shaye Wolf, Center for Biological Diversity

Chad Hanson, PhD, John Muir Project

Paul Hughes, Forests Forever

Kimberly Burr, Green Valley Creek Restoration

Craig Swolgaard  
Christy Sherr, John Muir Project  
Brian Nowicki, Center for Biological Diversity  
Alison Sheehey  
Rolf Skar, Campaign Manager, Greenpeace USA  
Daniel Brwdis, Greenpeace, USA  
Genevieve Gale, Central Valley Air Quality Coalition  
Larry Hanson, Forests Unlimited

- e. Proposition 84 Grant Award Report  
SNC Regional Manager Andy Fristensky provided a report on two Proposition 84 Grants awarded by authority delegated to the Executive Officer by the Board. The first is Grant Agreement 921 to the Tahoe National Forest Yuba Ranger District. This agreement is in the amount of \$35,000 to support completion of a Restoration Plan for The Upper North Yuba River Watershed.

The second grant is Grant Agreement 923 to the Feather River Resource Conservation District in the amount of \$48,961 to support environmental review and CEQA documentation for the Moonlight Fire Area Restoration Project.

**XV. Boardmember Comments**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien thanked departing Boardmembers Elizabeth Cavasso, Doug Teeter, Tom Wheeler, and Randy Fletcher.

Departing Boardmembers provided comments acknowledging the work of the SNC.

**XVI. Public Comments**

No public comments at this time.

Board Chair Terry O'Brien suggested a field tour of the Rim Fire area with the members of the public and Board. O'Brien sees this as an opportunity to share the different science between the groups.

**XVII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.