

Board Meeting Minutes  
June 11- 12, 2014  
Inter-Mountain Fairgrounds, Ingram Hall  
44218 A Street  
McArthur, CA 96056



**I. Call to Order**

Board Chair BJ Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM and thanked Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff and partners for a great field tour, reception, and dinner.

Kirwan noted that project 802 Upper Stevens Meadow had been pulled from the agenda for this meeting.

**II. Roll Call**

**Present:** BJ Kirwan, Todd Ferrara, Bob Kirkwood, Bob Johnston, John Brissenden, Pam Giacomini, Sherrie Thrall, Byng Hunt, Louis Boitano, Bernie Gyant, Ruben Leal (alternate for Este Stifel, Bureau of Land Management), and Woody Smeck (alternate for Don Neubacher, National Parks Service)

**Absent:** Ron Briggs and Allen Ishida

**III. Approval of March 12, 2014 Joint Board Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Thrall seconded a motion to approve the March 12, 2014 Joint Board Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.**

**IV. Approval of March 13, 2014 Board Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

Boardmember Boitano requested a correction in the spelling of his name in the oath of office section of the minutes.

**ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded a motion to approve the March 13, 2014 Meeting Minutes with Boardmember Boitano's edits incorporated. The motion was passed unanimously.**

**V. Public Comments**

Steve Munson, Far West Biopower and Green cloud Data Parks discussed a variety of projects that his company has been involved in, including efforts to bring the Loyalton biomass facility back online. He opined that two of the things needed to support bioenergy are (1) large scale thinning projects and (2) a carve-out for biomass energy as part of the Renewable Portfolio Standards.

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### **VI. Board Chair's Report**

Board Chair Kirwan asked Executive Officer Jim Branham to update the Board on what had occurred since the last meeting to address concerns that were raised regarding the need to improve understanding of the role and value of Conservancies in California, particularly among some members of the Legislature.

Branham said that staff have been meeting with members of the legislature and legislative staff to address the issue with some positive results, particularly in terms of favorable amendments to water bond legislation. He acknowledged the assistance of Assemblyman Brian Dahle for his assistance in arranging key meetings and speaking favorably in regards to the SNC. He indicated that no letter was sent as previously directed by the Board, given the positive developments resulting from the meetings.

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

Branham updated the Board on Board Liaison Theresa Burgess' status and discussed the reassignment of some of her workload while she is out of the office.

#### **a. Administrative Update**

Branham introduced Amy Lussier, SNC's Chief of Administrative Services Division, and noted that the type of resources used by the SNC to perform work has been changing over time, mostly as a result of changes in Administration policies, particularly policies related to the use of contracts and retired annuitants. He said this has resulted in hiring additional temporary help.

Lussier introduced 3 new staff: Danna Stroud, Elissa Brown, and Sarah Campe.

Lussier presented the Board with the SNC's current organization chart and discussed how staffing has changed at SNC over the last 10 years. In response to questions from Boardmember Brissenden she described work currently being performed by John Gussman (retired annuitant providing legal services) and said other conservancies are also assessing their staff resources. Branham noted that some other conservancies have a much larger staff than SNC.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked Lussier if the Board could get an updated profile list of SNC Staff at the next Board meeting.

Boardmember Smeck said that embedding SNC Staff within other agency and non-profit office locations throughout the Sierra has been very effective and offered office space in a National Park office for new staff member Campe in Three Rivers.

#### **b. Policy and Outreach Update**

Branham gave the Board an update on the various water bond efforts that are currently being considered by the legislature, including an amendment made

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earlier this week to Senator Wolk's bill that would include \$115 million to the SNC.

Board Chair Kirwan asked what the likelihood would be that a water bond would be on the ballot in November, and if there is a water bond, how long the money would be available. Branham commented that it seems very unlikely that there won't be a water bond in November, but said that the dollar amount voters would accept is still in question. Branham also said that it is unclear how long the funding would be available and discussed funding availability timelines from past bonds.

Branham updated the Board on Cap and Trade Auction Revenue and discussed SNC's ongoing efforts to encourage funding be allocated to forestry projects. He indicated that the SNC has been unsuccessful in securing funding, but is working closely with Cal Fire to assist in the expenditure of funds that they received.

Boardmember Ferrara said that The Sacramento Bee reported that the Governor and the legislature recently came to an agreement on Cap and Trade funding allocations. Ferrara said that according to The Bee, 25% of the funding would be allocated to high-speed rail, 15% to other transportation projects, 20% to housing projects, and 40% to natural resources, energy, and other projects.

Boardmember Johnston commented that it is anticipated that the funding available through Cap and Trade will increase next year. Boardmember Ferrara noted that this year revenue is estimated at about \$1 billion.

Branham introduced Angela Avery, Regional Policy and Programs Manager, who updated the Board on outreach and policy efforts in which staff have been engaged. Avery introduced a sample of one of the interactive story maps staff have been developing, the new Sierra Wildfire Wire blog, the new Rim Fire web page, and discussed efforts that staff would be kicking off for the SNC's 10 year anniversary in September.

Boardmember Gyant suggested changing the Lake Oroville photo to show the lake's current level in the story map.

Boardmember Johnston suggested that staff reduce the number of slides in the story map, or have a short and long version. He also suggested that options be added to the last slide so that users can see specific management options with approximate dollar amounts within the watershed that could be applied to improve water supply and quality issues.

Branham said that staff can address Johnston's suggestions, but need to be careful about taking a policy position through the content of the presentation.

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Gyant asked whether SNC has the staff resources to address the Board's suggestions related to the story map. Avery and Branham noted that SNC Staff can do some of the updates, but may not have the capacity to do all. Branham also mentioned staff can use any help they can get.

Boardmember Brissenden asked whether more details could be added to the story map around sedimentation in reservoirs. Avery said that it could and Branham mentioned that SNC recently entered in to a contract to complete a more in depth study on that issue.

Boardmember Thrall suggested that fire history over the last 10 years be added to the story map to help illustrate the risks to the watershed.

### c. Ranching and Agricultural Lands

Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan introduced guest speaker Penny Leff, Agritourism Coordinator, for the UC ANR Small Farm Program, who provided the Board with a presentation on the UC Small Farm Program's agritourism efforts.

Boardmembers and staff engaged Leff in discussions regarding liability costs and related options for producers, efforts to encourage agritourism in Marin County and SNC staff efforts to incorporate agritourism into the Sierra Nevada Geotourism Web site.

Keegan introduced Bobby Kamansky, Mt. Whitney Area Representative, who provided the Board with a presentation on a variety of issues relating to grazing in the Sierra Nevada.

Boardmember Giacomini asked about the potential for the SNC supporting water development projects on US Forest Service lands to help support grazing, while protecting riparian areas. The Board also engaged in a discussion about issues relating to grazing on public lands, strategies for grazing near riparian areas and the important role grazing permittees play in educating the public about its benefits.

### d. Miscellaneous Updates

Branham updated the Board on the Rim Fire restoration funding that the Board authorized in December, indicating that while no projects have come forward yet, he expects there to be progress in the coming weeks.

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

Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, updated the Board on actions related to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) reform.

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### IX. 2013-14 Healthy Forests/Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Awards (ACTION)

Branham reminded the Board that Project #802 has been removed from consideration for this meeting, and introduced Mt. Lassen Area Manager, Bob Kingman and Julie Griffith-Flatter, Mt. Lassen Area Representative, to give the Board a presentation on the recommended projects.

Griffith-Flatter introduced Project #791, Oro De Amador Removal Action Workplan located near Jackson. Kingman introduced Project #781 Camptonville Forest Biomass Business Center Feasibility Study, located in Yuba County.

Boardmember Ferrara asked if other funding sources have been identified that would help complete the Camptonville Biomass Project. Kingman responded that in-kind contributions have been identified, as well as grant funding from other sources.

Boardmember Hunt asked how many other biomass projects SNC has been working to fund. Kingman responded this is the first feasibility study the SNC has recommended for a grant, but that staff have been working on many other projects throughout the Sierra in different capacities.

Boardmember Gyant asked whether the biomass project was linked to SB 1122 (Rubio 2012). Kingman said that it is intent of the project proponents to make certain the project is eligible for incentives in SB 1122.

#### **Public Comment:**

Cathy LeBlanc, Co-Executive Director for the Camptonville Community Partnership, thanked the Board for their consideration of the Camptonville Forest Biomass Business Center Feasibility Study and invited the Board to attend a site visit on June 24th.

Steve Munson, Far West Biopower and Green Cloud Data Parks mentioned efforts that his company has been involved in reconditioning existing biomass sites and his investment bankers are currently available. If you have areas that may be good biomass sites that need substantial fuel thinning please let him know.

**ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded the motion to (a) approve, and authorize the Executive Officer to file, Notices of Exemption for the Oro De Amador Removal Action Workplan Project (SNC 791); and, the Camptonville Forest Biomass Business Center Feasibility Study Project (SNC 781). The motion passed unanimously.**

### X. Review of 2013-14 Action Plan Accomplishments (INFORMATIONAL)

Keegan gave the Board an overview of SNC's accomplishments over the past fiscal year and thanked staff and partners in the Region for their efforts in moving the

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mission of the SNC forward. She indicated that for the most part, all of the actions identified in the 2013-14 Plan were accomplished.

Boardmember Kirkwood commented that the Action Plan reflects a huge amount of work that was well done, and that the work contributes to one of the state's greatest needs right now, particularly relating to water reliability.

Gyant commented on work SNC has done that has been instrumental for the US Forest Service. He mentioned more education is still needed to connect Sierra landscapes to the urban population.

### XI. 2014-15 Proposed Action Plan (ACTION)

Keegan introduced the Proposed Action Plan for the coming fiscal year.

Boardmember Kirkwood discussed the role that the SNC should play in addressing fire and water issues in California. He indicated that this should be the organization's top priority and the necessary resources be devoted to making greater progress in restoring forest health and reducing the risk of large fires. He suggested that this prioritization may mean that some of the actions identified in the Action Plan are not completed.

Kirkwood recommended the Board not approve the current plan, but instead ask staff to re-draft the plan with a focus on a watershed by watershed strategy for increasing the pace and scale of forest health and water related work in the Sierra.

Boardmembers discussed Kirkwood's recommendation, and the role that SNC should play in water and fire issues for the next few years. There was general support for the idea of making this the top priority. Boardmember Gyant expressed some concern that the wood/biomass processing infrastructure was not adequate to handle the increase and that more work was needed in that area. Boardmember Ferrara urged the SNC to consider how its efforts were consistent with other State plans including the California Water Action Plan.

Branham responded to Boardmember comments indicating that this issue was already a top priority for the organization and that an additional focus and effort was appropriate. He did suggest that the Board approve the Action Plan as presented, with the understanding that staff will develop a plan for a more bold approach to the issue of forest health and would bring any needed modifications to the Action Plan to the Board in September.

**ACTION: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Hunt seconded the motion to approve the proposed Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2014-15 Action Plan, with the direction that staff will provide a recommendation at the September Board meeting as to any adjustments to the Plan necessary to adequately address the priority**

**issues related to forest health, fire, and water. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Public Comment:**

Chuck Henderson, Shasta Forests Timberlands commented that perfection not be the enemy of the good, and encouraged the SNC to move forward with the Board's recommendation to encourage the increase in the pace and scale of forest work in the Sierra.

**XII. Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis (INFORMATIONAL)**

Branham introduced Kim Carr, SNC's Sustainability Specialist, who gave the Board a presentation on the findings from the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis. Carr also updated the Board on the media and marketing opportunities staff have been considering related to the study.

Kirkwood commented on Carr's presentation and encouraged staff to continue to research the benefits of forest thinning related to water yield. Kirkwood suggested that staff present the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis to the various irrigation districts whose supply originates in the Sierra and incorporate information about the connection between forest management and reservoir management.

Boardmember Brissenden asked who was at the table during the cost analysis, and who should be at the table moving forward with this study. Carr commented on other audiences being identified and efforts that are being made to expand on the study. Boardmembers Boitano and Gyant suggested several other audiences that should be included.

Boardmember Johnston commented on current activities related to Clean Water Act regulations for watersheds that need to be treated for sediment and suggested a more developed watershed study in the future.

**XIII. Boardmembers' Comments**

Boardmember Hunt indicated he looked forward to the Board meeting in Bridgeport in Mono County in September.

**XIV. Public Comments**

Burt Bundy, President of the Mill Creek Conservancy and a member of the Los Molinos Mutual Water Board, commented on the potential impacts of regulations related to the drought and encouraged SNC to be involved in discussions around water management moving forward.

**XV. Adjournment**

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 12:54 PM.