I. Call to Order
Chairman Chrisman called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM

II. Roll Call
Present: John Brissenden, Mike Chrisman, Byng Hunt, Tom Wheeler alternate for Jon McQuiston, Bob Kirkwood, BJ Kirwan, Byron Sher, Robert Weygandt, Carol Whiteside, Steve Wilensky, Mike Chapel, Bill Haigh and Mike Tollefson.

Absent: Brian Dahle, Rose Comstock and John Lloyd

III. Approval of June 5, 2008 Meeting Minutes
There were no changes to the Meeting Minutes.

Action: Boardmember Whiteside moved and Boardmember Brissenden seconded a motion to approve the June 5, 2008 Board Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comments
There were no public comments at this time; however, Boardmember Brissenden noted how exciting it was during the field trip to see the collaboration and SNC dollars at work in local communities.

V. Chairman’s Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. State Budget Update
Chairman Chrisman stated this was like no other budget process he has been involved in and there may be some mid-year budget reconstruction. Chrisman noted that SNC’s budget of $17 million has strong support and that the Resources Agency, “came out pretty well,” given that there was approximately a seven percent reduction overall in the state budget. He stated that the Resources Agency is blessed with special bond funds that support many of the programs like the SNC. Chrisman noted the Executive Order, issued in July, is still in place, unless something on the revenue side changes.

b. Board meeting schedule for 2009
Chairman Chrisman indicated that a revised schedule for 2009 has been provided to Board members. The only change from the previously approved schedule is moving the September meeting so that the SNC may participate in a joint field trip with the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC). The Board concurred in the revised schedule and Executive Officer Branham will work with RCRC on the meeting details.
and report back to the Board. Chairman Chrisman noted the 2008 December meeting will be held in Calaveras County with Boardmember Wilensky as the host.

c. *Presentation on the Lower Owens River Project from Greg James, Special Counsel to Inyo County*

Mr. James gave an in-depth accounting on the history of the City of Los Angeles’ efforts to divert Eastern Sierra watershed from the Lower Owens River Valley, including the efforts of the Mono Lake Committee to save Mono Lake. Mr. James discussed the present day interaction between the City of Los Angeles and local government of the Eastern Sierra, and the need for more collaboration. Mr. James thanked the Board for the grant. Mr. James introduced Kevin Carunchio, Chief Administrative Officer of Inyo County.

Mr. Carunchio stated Supervisor Linda Arcularius apologized for not attending the Board meeting. He noted that phase one of a recreational use planning process is underway. The SNC grant will be used to hire a plan writer and facilitator for the purposes of including a broad segment of the community, including school children, in the planning process. Mr. Carunchio introduced Nathan Reed with the Inyo/Mono Agricultural Commissioner’s Office.

Mr. Reed described the noxious weed control program, as well as the specific activities being funded by the SNC. Chairman Chrisman asked what weeds were the focus of this effort and the affect they had on waterways. Mr. Reed stated the it is primarily pepperweed, a native of China with stringy roots that takes over on stream banks and makes them prone to erosion.

VI. Executive Officer’s Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. *Budget/Staffing Update*

Jim Branham, Executive Officer, reported that vacancies have occurred in two permanent positions since the last Board meeting. As a result of the Executive Order issued by the Governor in July, the SNC is unable to fill these vacancies and has also lost all of its retired annuitants and student assistants. Because the SNC is a small organization, the loss of these resources has created challenges. While all of the staff at SNC has stepped up to meet these challenges, Branham specifically recognized a number of staff, who have done excellent work despite having reduced resources: Kerri Timmer and Angela Avery with regard to grants administration; Pete Dufour and Shelly Owens with regard to administrative functions, and; Theresa Burgess with regard to all of the work she does to support the Board, the executives, and the entire organization. Branham also recognized three retired annuitants, who volunteered their time without pay to the SNC after the issuance of the Executive: Rita Adair, Laurie Keith, and Barbara Harriman.
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Branham directed the Board’s attention to the tables in the staff report and explained that specific line items within the budget this year are different from last year based on adjustments to more accurately reflect where actual expenditures are occurring.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked whether the SNC could proceed with filling our vacancies now that the new State budget is in place. Branham explained that the SNC is still unable to hire since the Executive Order is still in effect, but that we are hoping for some relief from the Executive Order in the future.

Boardmember Kirkwood noted that the cost of personal services went up between last fiscal year and the current fiscal year while the cost of contracts went down significantly. Branham explained that this is mostly attributable to two things: the SNC reached full staffing during the prior fiscal year and there were some large contracts in the prior year that were one time in nature, in particular a large contract for the procurement of a grants management system for the SNC.

Branham concluded by calling attention to the Administration and legislature’s continued strong support for the SNC, as evidenced by the full base funding and $17 million of Proposition 84 grant funds proposed by the Governor and included in the final budget passed by the legislature for the 2008-09 fiscal year.

b. 2008-09 Grants Update
Branham provided an update of the grants program. While the Board authorized nearly $17 million last year, two grants authorized by the Board were not executed resulting in a total of $15.9 being expended. Discussing a chart showing the distribution of all grants awarded last year by Subregion, he noted the differences in Subregional amounts was primarily due to the disproportionate number of competitive grant applications received and approved from certain Subregions. Branham also presented a graphic showing the distribution of funds for the year by project categories as follows: about 60 percent awarded to on the ground (site improvement/acquisition), 10 percent pre-project planning to directly lead to an on the ground project, and about 30 percent categorized as other (planning, monitoring/research and education/interpretation). Boardmember Whiteside suggested identifying the Subregions on a map in reports and all presentations. Boardmember Brissenden suggested linking funds to individual legislative districts to show distribution for future bond measure considerations.

He indicated that applications received in this year’s first SOG round were, as a general rule, quite well prepared. He suggested this may be due to clarifications in the guidelines, outreach efforts to applicants and the fact applicants are more familiar and comfortable with the SNC process. Branham noted that at the last Board meeting staff had recommended and the Board approved a plan to award about half the SOG amount in December and the remaining in June and that staff will be guided by that direction in bringing recommendations forward in December. He also noted that the upper limit for SOG1 grants has been increased to
$250,000 from $100,000. The intent of this change was to increase the number of SOG 1 applications, however this has not proven to be the case in the first round.

Program Manager Kerri Timmer provided an overview of competitive grants. There is one annual deadline for competitive grants and this year 30 applications were received and of these, three were deemed ineligible or incomplete. Competitive grants recommendations will be made at the March 2009 Board meeting. She added that there is one more round of Strategic Opportunity Grants (SOGs) applications due in February to be authorized by the Board in June, 2009. Last fiscal year, 146 grants were awarded and are currently being managed by the area staff. About 120 applications have already been submitted for this year.

c. Sierra Nevada License Plate Update
   Branham reviewed information provided in the staff report for this item, including progress in the following areas: the development of a license plate design with approval from Department of Motor Vehicles, California Highway Patrol and the SNC Board; completion of a marketing plan by Velocity 7 and The Sierra Fund; and the recent completion of a draft sign-up brochure to be used when enough funds have been raised to kick-off the marketing campaign. Branham went on to mention that raising funds in the current economic climate has proven difficult and described three competing environmental plate campaigns currently or about to be launched. Chairman Chrisman asked how much money is needed to trigger the marketing plan. Branham responded that the entire campaign is estimated to cost about $350,000 and about one-half of that would be needed to kick-off the campaign.

   Boardmember Whiteside suggested that it would be beneficial if the SNC could coordinate with the other license plate campaigns instead of competing against each other. She suggested that Secretary Chrisman lead this effort. Boardmember Brissenden agreed and asked if there is a “drop dead” date to trigger the campaign. Branham responded that there is not. Boardmember Brissenden then asked if any conversations have been had by all the competing agencies and Chairman Chrisman responded that there had not been conversations to his knowledge. Branham added that SNC staff has been communicating with two of the other agencies interested in new plate programs, but opportunities for cooperation are minimal at this point. Boardmember Whiteside commented that the SNC Board had not been solicited for funds to kick-off the campaign. Branham responded that that would be quickly remedied. Chairman Chrisman indicated that he would follow up on the issue and initiate a conversation with other agencies pursuing new plates.

d. “Greening the SNC” Update

   Branham reported that the SNC has formed a “Green Team,” led by Brandon Sanders, to identify short and long-term opportunities to reduce and/or mitigate the environmental impacts of SNC’s operations. The Green Team will identify and
implement feasible actions in three key areas, including energy efficiency, recycling/source reduction/reuse, and water and air, to determine ways to measure the effect of those actions on the SNC’s overall carbon footprint. Boardmember Kirkwood pointed out patent concerns with the use of remanufactured printer ink cartridges, one of the potential actions identified. Staff will report back to the Board on progress at future meetings.

e. Strategic Plan Update Process
Branham explained that the SNC’s Strategic Plan is now at the two-and-a-half year mark. He stated that, while a comprehensive review will occur at the five year point, it is a good time to review the Plan to ensure that it continues to address critical issues and determine if there need to be any changes.

Branham noted that staff has tentatively identified the issue of climate change as an area where greater emphasis should be provided in the plan and that staff also recommends reorganization of the Plan, moving specific actions proposed (many of which have been completed), to an appendix that can be updated on a regular basis.

Branham proposed that staff prepare a draft revised plan to be considered at the December Board meeting. Following Board review and modifications at the December meeting, a draft would be made available to the public and comments considered in preparation of a final draft for approval at the March 2009 Board meeting.

f. Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council Update
Soapy Mulholland, representing the Stewardship Council, presented a brief history of the Council; stating it was formed as part of a PG&E settlement agreement with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The agreement establishes that 140,000 acres of PG&E’s watershed lands will be conserved in perpetuity. It is anticipated that some of the lands will be donated to eligible parties and other lands may continue to reside with PG&E. In addition, the Council is to create a Youth Investment Program providing $30 million in funding over 10-years to programs that provide outdoor opportunities for underserved youth or enhance parks and recreation areas. The Council is to cease to exist by about 2013. Members of the Stewardship Council and SNC staff have been discussing an appropriate role for SNC in this process. Mulholland suggested a role for SNC is to support small, non-profit organizations to build capacity to be able to manage certain parcels of land.

Boardmember Kirkwood stated that the SNC is prohibited from buying land but can receive land, so we could consider establishing a joint venture to hold lands. Chairman Chrisman stated there is a long-term role for SNC to participate as partners and empower smaller land conservation entities. Furthermore, introducing youth to the outdoors is the greatest portion of the program. SNC can
play an important role in increasing the capacity of partners to ensure the program is successful beyond 2013.

Mulholland suggested SNC help with land management enforcement if donees need help. Chairman Chrisman appointed Boardmembers Haigh and Wheeler (alternate for the South Subregion) to a committee to assist staff in exploring the issue further.

VII. Deputy Attorney General’s Report (INFORMATIONAL)
Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, noted that several things are happening in the area of climate change. The Air Resources Board is developing regulations related to AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. In addition, SB 375, which was recently chaptered into law, links greenhouse gas reductions to local land use planning, including, for example, reductions in vehicle miles traveled. One potential role for the SNC could be to help local communities meet the State targets and coordinate information among local communities. Finally, there have been recent court cases related to the need to address climate change as part of the CEQA process.

Chairman Chrisman stated that the Resources Agency is also working on a Climate Adaptation Strategy under the direction of Tony Brunello, which is expected to be completed next spring.

VIII. Schedule for Expenditures of Proposition 84 funds (ACTION)
Branham noted that at the June Board meeting the Board approved a plan to award $17 million in Proposition 84 grant funds in the current fiscal year. The plan included an allocation of $14 million among the various grant categories and $3 million to remain unallocated. He indicated that staff is proposing that the plan be revised to expend $14 million in the current year, with $3 million to remain available for future year funding. He pointed out that the recommendation is based on the uncertainty relating to future bond measures and would allow the SNC to extend the Proposition 84 funding an additional year, with awards of approximately $10 million annually for 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Boardmember Kirwan questioned if the bond money is not available in the future, will the Legislature be willing to support the SNC, considering its good track record of accomplishments. Chairman Chrisman noted it is a good question, but noted the significant strain on the state budget. Boardmember Kirkwood indicated his support of the staff recommendation. Branham commented that the good news is SNC will be in a significantly better position to ask for a bigger share of the next bond, due to greater knowledge of what’s needed in the Region and track record of developing a good grant delivery system.
Action: Boardmember Whiteside moved and Boardmember Sher seconded a motion to approve the expenditure of Proposition 84 funds with $14 million for this fiscal year and review future allocation in the guidelines process for 2009-10 and 2010-11 fiscal years. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Climate Change (ACTION)
Branham introduced the topic and then introduced Steve Eubanks, a consultant to the SNC on Climate Change, to present a prepared overview of the work he has completed and compiled over the last several months. Eubanks presented topics included in the staff report and his assessment of subject areas where continuing work should be focused. Board members urged the staff to coordinate with other entities, including the University of California system.

Branham then described the following four areas identified by the SNC for future work: 1). Action – On the Ground Activities. This includes demonstration projects. An example can be found in Placer County’s work to develop a local carbon market. Another involves the work that Sierra Business Council is doing to create carbon markets. Branham wanted to bring attention to Tom Knudson’s recent article in the Sacramento Bee and the importance of looking at projects through a “climate change lens”. 2). Creation of a Web-based information center. 3). Educate and advocate for actions within and outside of the region. 4). Play the role of a neutral convener, especially in sensitive topic areas, to ensure dialogue occurs.

Branham concluded by saying that the Governor would be commenting later this week on the efforts to be undertaken by the Conservancy. Chairman Chrisman asked for comments and reiterated that the Governor would be highlighting activities in the Sierra and suggested that SNC staff continue to have conversations with Tony Brunello.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked how outside funding plays into the budget process. Branham responded that there is a preference to keep outside money out of the State budget process. Boardmember Kirkwood mentioned that it might be timely to revisit the possibility of an SNC foundation. Chairman Chrisman requested volunteers from Board to work with staff and Boardmembers Kirkwood and Kirwan were appointed to serve on a committee of the Board.

Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Wilensky seconded a motion to direct the Executive Officer and staff to begin implementing actions that are consistent with the climate change initiative, using and leveraging available resources where possible and seeking additional funding to support the increased level of activity called for in the Governor’s directive. The motion passed unanimously.

After the vote Boardmember Chapel suggested forming a leadership-level body to coordinate climate change activities in California, citing that he is aware of four different existing efforts to do a web-based approach. Boardmember Whiteside
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followed the comment by suggesting that the Biodiversity Council assume this responsibility. Boardmember Chapel responded that the Biodiversity Council does not have a good track record for doing this kind of activity. Chairman Chrisman interjected and said that there needs to be a discussion with the Biodiversity Council about this issue. Boardmember Kirkwood said that we need to make this into a “do tank” and not a “think tank”.

X. Draft Annual Report (ACTION)

Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan presented a draft of the SNC’s first Annual Report. The SNC’s enabling legislation requires it to report on expenditures, land management costs, and administrative costs annually. In order to create a more interesting and informative report, provide easy access to the report throughout the Region, and to make this a “green” report, the SNC focused on an interactive online version. Keegan showed a few short video clips of partners describing their impressions of the SNC and how the organization has already begun to make a difference in the Sierra Nevada Region. Boardmember Whiteside suggested producing hard copies of an executive summary to distribute to legislators and other key decision-makers. Boardmember Wilensky suggested a strategic distribution of the report and that staff make a presentation to each County Board of Supervisors within the SNC boundaries. Boardmembers Kirkwood suggested a Subregional format so each County Supervisor can have a copy in their office.

Action: Boardmember Brissenden moved and Boardmember Whiteside seconded a motion to approve the Annual Report with the addition of a Regional map. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. SNC Indicators Project (ACTION)

AEO Keegan reviewed the process used to develop Program Performance Measures and System Indicators, as called for in the Strategic Plan, to measure the success of SNC projects and programs and progress toward improving the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Region. She reminded the Board that the first step, approval of Program and Project Performance Measures, occurred in June 2008. The measures approved at that meeting are now being implemented with this year’s applicants and grantees.

Keegan then turned the presentation over to Steve Frisch, who served on the consultant team and was the team lead on System Indicators.

Frisch detailed the work that went into developing draft indicators. First the team developed a set of principles to guide the effort, including that the indicators be: simple, pragmatic, tell a story inside and outside the Sierra, involve innovative thought, and inform both the SNC’s and other entities’ efforts in the Region. Then, looking at other indicators – from the international World Bank to very localized efforts, like Silicon Valley – the team chose a set of 19 Core Indicators (for direct and primary use
by the SNC in decision-making processes) and a complementary set of more Comprehensive System Indicators (to start assessing the overall sustainability of the Region including but also going beyond the SNC’s mission, goals and objectives).

Proposed indicators were vetted through a set of selection criteria related to: spatial scale, time factor, credibility/reliability, their ability to be readily understood by decision-makers and the public, usefulness for decision-making, feasibility/cost to collect the data, comprehensiveness, and relationship to other SNC programs, such as the Strategic Plan or the education/communications plan.

The team developed a very rough cost estimate of between $120,000 – 150,000 to collect, analyze and aggregate, and report data associated with the 19 Core Indicators. For the larger set of Comprehensive Indicators, the consultant team recommended that the SNC start by convening a key stakeholders group to review and refine the indicator list and to help identify potential funding sources and partnerships to share in the implementation effort.

Boardmember Kirkwood pointed out that the recommended indicators did not include social indicators. Frisch responded that, over time, the two sets of indicators – Core and Comprehensive – would work together to paint a full picture of regional sustainability, including the social element. Time and funding constraints kept the team from including more specific social indicators at this point; however, they can be added later if the SNC so desires.

The Board more generally discussed potential uses for the indicator information, including generating more funding in the Region, strategic planning, augmenting the SNC’s education/communications plan, and reporting to legislators and stakeholders about successes. Stories associated with the indicators could include working landscapes, acres treated for fire risk reduction, carbon sequestration and the link between protecting land and effects on climate change in the Region, among others.

Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Whiteside seconded a motion to approve the 19 Core Indicators and to authorize staff to (a) make changes to the Core Indicators, if necessary, once the implementation process begins, and (b) to explore the interest in and feasibility of moving ahead on the Comprehensive Indicators with stakeholders and partners. The motion passed unanimously.

XII. Review of Organizational Progress To Date (INFORMATIONAL)

Chairman Chrisman asked Boardmembers to share their thoughts on how SNC is doing now that it has been four years since the SNC’s enabling legislation was signed into law.

Boardmember Whiteside said that the initial angst that accompanied the creation of the SNC has largely been dispelled. Branham agreed, citing discussions he had
recently with local supervisors at a meeting of the Regional Council of Rural Counties. Branham said that having such strong representation from local government on the SNC Board has helped, as has the SNC’s efforts to engage and partner with the landowner community. In addition, he pointed out that the projects funded by the SNC speak for themselves. Branham stated that progress has been made with the Sierra Nevada Region legislative delegation, although there is still work to do.

Boardmember Wheeler agreed that progress has been made and suggested that the SNC should do more outreach to local Boards of Supervisors using the just approved Annual Report.

Boardmember Weygandt also agreed, saying that concerns expressed by a number of constituents and groups in his county have dissipated.

Boardmember Kirkwood stated his belief that the outreach done by staff had been effective and also the fact that grants funded by the SNC have not been controversial.

Boardmember Wilensky said that he had worked with many state agencies, but that the SNC is unique. The staff has such a passion for the mission and is more connected with grassroots efforts than other agencies. He stated that the SNC needs to work toward even more collaboration and coordination, especially related to climate change and watershed efforts, and that the next stage of addressing the Region’s needs will be deeper and tougher.

Chairman Chrisman commented that organizational sustainability is a challenge. Boardmember Hunt responded that it is an evolutionary process and he recommended that staff and Boardmembers engage in ongoing advocacy and education with local government leaders. He also raised a concern regarding ongoing funding for the SNC once the Proposition 84 funds are expended.

Boardmember Kirkwood said he feels the action related to reducing the threat of fire in the wildland-urban interface needs more emphasis. Branham suggested that the recent passage of SB 375 by the legislature will provide greater incentives for communities to look at this and agreed that the SNC should help address the issue through its grant program and other kinds of partnerships.

Boardmember Whiteside stated that there needs to be more data collection and modeling related to development and asked whether it might not be appropriate for the SNC to become a hub for this kind of information. She said that having a neutral party serve in this role would be helpful.

Boardmember Kirwan said that she gets asked why she is on the SNC Board given the fact that she is from Southern California and that she responds by explaining that the Region is important to Southern California and that Southern California is important to the Region. Many people in Southern California recreate in the Sierra Nevada and draw resources from it. She stated that it is important to help public
opinion makers in South California understand this because they can provide support for funding. Boardmember Kirkwood noted that the same is true for the Bay Area.

Branham said that the issue of climate change provides an additional opportunity to make a case for support outside the Region, noting that whenever anyone in California is discussing climate change, one of the first things they point to is the impact on the snow pack in the Sierra Nevada. He said that fire also provides an opportunity, because many people are touched by the negative impacts of fire. Boardmember Kirkwood stated that these important issues are coalescing and he suggested that the SNC should help facilitate a process with local communities related to reducing the risk of fire.

Boardmember Weygandt said that dealing with climate change provides an opportunity to find some common elements and create successful projects for addressing a variety of issues. Boardmember Sher commented that one aspect of that should be reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled.

Boardmember Chapel said that the SNC should continue to take on issues the way it has been doing it, through a participatory approach. He said that other government organizations operating within the Region were created a long time ago with different expectations and that SNC’s participatory and trust-building model is effective.

Boardmember Tollefson commented on how much the federal land managers in the Region like working with the SNC and that the SNC should continue to share work that is state-of-the-art, like the Annual Report and System Indicators.

Boardmember Wilensky expressed his concerns about what the SNC would do for funding after the Proposition 84 funds are expended. He said that all of the money flowing into the Region—through state and federal government entities, UC’s, utilities, and others—is not spent as effectively as it could be due to lack of coordination. He recommended the creation of a committee that would work with staff to consider how existing resources could be used better and to identify new resources. Chairman Chrisman concurred and appointed Boardmembers Wilensky and Sher to the committee.

XIII. Recognition of Boardmembers Whiteside and Tollefson

Chairman Chrisman thanked both Boardmembers Whiteside and Tollefson for their continued support and contributions to the Board. Chairman Chrisman asked for comments by either Boardmember.

Boardmember Whiteside stated it is always hard to say goodbye. She stated she was grateful for the even hand and leadership from Chairman Chrisman and for having Jim Branham as the Executive Officer. She was complimentary of the staff as well,
pointing out the work that Theresa Burgess has done for the Board. Boardmember Whiteside stated it is one of her fondest memories, and will continue to treasure her experience.

Boardmember Tollefson stated it has been an honor to be a part of this Board. Noting it is an organization that people look to for guidance and leadership. He noted that he looked forward to working with the Board in the future in his new capacity.

XIV. Board Members’ Comments

Boardmember Wilensky note the December Board Meeting is scheduled for Calaveras County reminding everyone to bring the hiking boots and be prepared to an exciting day.

XV. Public Comments

Joan Clayburgh, representing the Sierra Nevada Alliance, handed out copies of the Sierra Nevada Yard and Garden Guide to all Boardmembers and described the educational and Region-wide benefits of the publication. She thanked the Board and staff for support of the project and their efforts to circulate and educate the communities in the Region about the importance of the sustainable practices displayed in the guide.

Hector Violonas, BLM Land Manager, works in Eastern Sierra, in Kern, Mono and Inyo Counties. The areas he is most concerned about are Sand Canyon, Shore Canyon and 80 miles of Pacific Crest Trail and multi-users. He indicated he is looking forward to working with SNC in the future.

XVI. Adjournment

Chairman Chrisman adjourned the meeting at 1:19 PM