

### **Background**

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) was allocated \$54 million from the Proposition 84, Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, passed by the voters in 2006. Should the Board approve today's awards recommendations for the 2011-12 Healthy Forests Grant Program, approximately \$5 million will be available for award in 2012-13.

At its June 2012 meeting, the SNC Board approved the 2012-13 Grant Guidelines for the final competitive grant cycle to support the Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands (Ranches and AgLands) grant program as identified in the SNC's Strategic Plan. The Board had previously directed that \$5 million of the remaining dollars available to the SNC through Proposition 84 would be used to support this area of focus. The Grant Guidelines and accompanying Grant Application Packet were released on June 18, 2012, opening the grant round and requesting grant project proposals in the form of pre-applications.

### **Current Status**

The timeframe to submit pre-applications for the 2012-13 Ranches and AgLands grant cycle ended on July 16, 2012. SNC received 93 pre-applications totaling \$17,035,667.73 in funding requests. Of those, 66 (71%) are for Category 1 projects (site improvement or conservation easement acquisitions) and 27 (29%) are for Category 2 (pre-project activities leading to an eligible project). There are 42 projects requesting \$8 million for site improvement projects and 24 projects requesting approximately \$7.3 million for conservation easement acquisitions. Pre-project planning activities have been proposed for the remaining 27 projects, requesting \$1.7 million. The project breakdown by Subregion is noted below:

<b>2012-13 Ranches and AgLands Grant Program Pre-Applications Received</b>				
<b>By Subregion</b>		<b>% of Projects</b>		<b>% of Funding</b>
Central	22	24%	\$4,172,000.00	24%
North	20	22%	\$3,299,894.83	19%
North Central	15	16%	\$2,722,524.00	16%
South	11	12%	\$2,155,899.90	13%
South Central	12	13%	\$2,001,900.00	12%
East	7	8%	\$1,662,320.00	10%
Multiple Subregions	6	6%	\$1,021,129.00	6%

### **Next Steps**

SNC staff is reviewing all pre-applications for eligibility, paying particular attention to project readiness for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. An internal CEQA Review Team is working with SNC Project Leads, CEQA consultants and applicants to ensure their projects are CEQA ready, and if not, that they have a clear understanding of what it will take to be in compliance with the 2012-13 Ranches and AgLands Grant Guidelines. Projects that have CEQA compliance problems will be

flagged for additional review and assistance during application development, should they be otherwise eligible. Projects that are identified as being unable to comply with CEQA will either be declined for invitation to submit a full application during pre-application review, or will be addressed early in the application review phase of the process. The full schedule for this grant cycle is as follows:

GRANT PROGRAM ELEMENTS	Target Date or Duration
<b>RELEASE PRESERVATION OF RANCHES AND AGRICULTURAL LANDS GUIDELINES AND GAPS - OPEN RFP</b>	6/18/2012
<b>PRE-APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b> SNC staff will be available to work with applicants on preparation of pre-applications to be submitted during this period.	6/18/2012-7/13/2012
<b>PRE-APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE:</b> If an applicant wishes to receive SNC grant funding, they <b>must</b> submit a pre-application and the associated attachments no later than 5:00 pm on this date.	7/13/2012
 <b>PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW PERIOD:</b> SNC will review pre-applications for eligibility (including focus area alignment) and completeness. Invitations to submit a full application may occur any time after the pre-application has been reviewed, but no later than COB 8/13/2012.	7/16/2012-8/13/2012
 <b>FULL APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT PERIOD:</b> Applicants who receive an invitation to submit a full application should work with SNC staff to develop and refine their full application during this period.	8/15/2012-10/19/2012
<b>FULL APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE - CLOSE RFP:</b> All elements of a full application must be complete and submitted by COB on this date.	10/19/2012
<b>FULL APPLICATION REVIEW:</b> SNC staff and technical evaluators will evaluate all complete applications, resulting in a score up to 100 points. Consultation with the Board Subregional committees, as well as communication with affected local agencies will occur during this period.	10/22/2012-1/13/2013
<b>FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO SNC BOARD:</b> Staff will provide recommendations based on the evaluation, including consideration of geographic distribution of projects.	3/7/2013

**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.**