

Background

Since its creation in 2006, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has developed a number of projects and initiatives consistent with its statutory mandate. The Board has provided direction and been updated on these projects and initiatives as appropriate. In addition, the Board approved a new [Strategic Plan](#) and accompanying [2012-13 Action Plan](#) for the SNC within the last year and all of the projects and initiatives being undertaken by the SNC are consistent with these plans.

Despite this high degree of action on the part of the SNC, only one set of activities has been organized around a specific program: the SNC Proposition 84 Grant Program. In looking at the statute that created the SNC, however, it is clear that all of the SNC's activities can be grouped under seven primary programs with only one of them related to grants. These are not related to the seven subject matter focused program goals in the enabling legislation, rather, these are seven types of activities the SNC is authorized to perform on behalf of the Region. By grouping activities being undertaken by the SNC under these seven program areas, the Board and staff can more easily understand how the SNC's current activities align with the types of activities envisioned in its enabling legislation.

This alignment of SNC activities under seven statutorily authorized program areas is particularly timely in light of the fact that the SNC is nearing the end of its Proposition 84 grant funds, because it makes it that much more clear that other activities being undertaken by the SNC are equally as important from an overall program perspective.

SNC Programs

In creating the SNC, the legislation laid out a broad mission for the organization as well as enumerating several specific activities it is authorized to undertake on behalf of the Region. In order to meet these statutory mandates, SNC is undertaking activities within six program areas. These programs provide the underpinnings for its efforts to serve the Sierra Nevada and, ultimately, the entire State of California.

The first three programs draw their authority from the SNC's broad mission to "initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities and the citizens of California," as well as an expressed intent on the part of the Legislature and then-Governor Schwarzenegger to create an organization that would provide Region-wide leadership and coordination on issues affecting the Sierra Nevada as well as promote greater understanding of the issues and importance of the Region at a statewide level and beyond. The four remaining programs are tied to activities specifically referenced in the SNC's enabling legislation ([AB 2600](#) Stats. 2004, ch. 726).

Under each program, are examples of activities the SNC has or is undertaking within that program area; future activities in these areas may include yet to be determined opportunities and/or a continuation of these activities. All planned activities are consistent with the 2012-13 Action Plan approved by the Board.

Policy Development Program (State and Federal)

- Biomass Utilization
- Forest Management on Public Lands
- Mokelumne Environmental Benefits Project

Education and Advocacy Program

- Sierra Day at the Capitol
- Subject Matter Symposia
- Selected legislation, including water bond

Region-wide Projects Program

- Great Sierra River Cleanup
- Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project
- State Water Plan; Mountain County Overlay Development
- Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council

Grant Program - [Section 33343 of the Public Resources Code](#) (PRC): *“The conservancy may make grants or loans to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations in order to carry out the purposes of this division...”*

- Proposition 84 Grant Program
- Other future grant programs

Collaborative Planning Program - [Section 33346 \(a\) of the PRC](#): *“The conservancy may expend funds and award grants and loans to facilitate collaborative planning efforts and to develop projects and programs that are designed to further the purposes of this division.”*

- Facilitation of local forestry collaboratives, e.g. Amador Calaveras Consensus Group, Sustainable Forest and Community Collaborative
- Facilitation services for development of Integrated Regional Water Management Plans (IRWMPs) within the Region

Technical and Other Assistance Program - [Section 33346 \(b\) of the PRC](#): *“The conservancy may provide and make available technical information, expertise, and other nonfinancial assistance to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations to support program and project development and implementation.”*

- Grant writing assistance, e.g., assistance provided to local forestry collaboratives in putting together federal grant applications
- Assistance in complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and/or the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA), e.g., assistance provided to the U.S. Forest Service for completion of NEPA process needed to complete fuels thinning projects identified by local forestry collaboratives
- Clearinghouse for information, e.g. funding opportunities

- Sponsorship of relevant events and programs, e.g., California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Annual Summit, Sierra Nevada Alliance Annual Conference
- Acting as a fiscal agent or intermediary, e.g., assisting in the transfer of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery from the Department of Fish and Game to a new owner in order to preserve it as a local community resource

Research and Monitoring Program - [Section 33351 of the PRC](#): *“The conservancy may expend funds under this division to conduct research and monitoring in connection with development and implementation of the program administered under this division.”*

- Study of impacts on water supply from meadow restoration
- Sierra Watershed Ecosystem Enhancement Project (SWEEP)
- Sierra Nevada System Indicators Project

Alignment of Programs with the Strategic Plan

All of the activities being undertaken or planned to be undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan adopted by the Board in September 2011 fall within the six program outlined above. One way to look at this is to take the projects and initiatives laid out in the 2012-13 Action Plan and consider how the specific activities taking place under each of them connect to one of these six program areas. The results of this analysis can be seen in the table on the following page, which provides an overview of how activities being undertaken as part of projects in the Action Plan align with the seven program areas.

Table 1: How SNC Programs Align with 2012-13 Action Plan Projects

	Policy Development	Education & Advocacy	Region-wide Projects	Grants	Collaborative Planning	Technical & Other Assistance	Research & Monitoring
Grant Program				X			
Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)	X	X	X		X	X	X
Regional Water	X	X	X		X		
Regional Agricultural and Ranching Initiative				X		X	
Geotourism		X	X				
Ecosystem Services	X	X			X		X
Education and Communications		X					
Funding Development		X				X	
Great Sierra River Cleanup		X	X				
Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council			X			X	
Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery						X	
Sierra Nevada System Indicators							X

Next Steps

Looking at SNC activities with this type of program focus lays the foundation for ongoing discussions with the Board regarding what we are doing in support of each of these statutorily authorized programs. It also opens the door for future discussions with the Board regarding how our allocation of resources aligns with these seven programs. As staff brings the new 2013-14 Action Plan to the Board and we work to align budget resources with that Plan, this program view offers another way of evaluating whether SNC projects and resources are best allocated to meet our broad statutory mission.

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.