

Background

In November 2006, California voters passed Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, which included \$54 million for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), with approximately \$50 million to be granted to eligible projects throughout the Region. Including the September 2012 grant awards, the SNC has awarded 225 projects worth approximately \$45 million through several competitive rounds. In March 2013 the Board is scheduled to consider approximately \$5 million in grant awards for the Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands. After awards are made in March, the SNC will have granted almost all of its allocated Proposition 84 funds. Staff has calculated to date that there will be approximately \$1.3 million remaining as the result of previous grant project savings and grant projects that were not implemented. This amount may increase if additional projects are not implemented or current projects have funds remaining after their completion. This report will discuss options for the use of those remaining funds.

At the direction of the Board, the most recent two grant rounds have been focused on Healthy Forests, and Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands, respectively. To the extent allowed in Proposition 84 Bond legislation, all other grant rounds have been designed to address the full complement of SNC Programs.

Current Status

SNC Staff has completed an analysis of several different ideas about how to most effectively invest the remaining \$ 1.3 million of Proposition 84 funds. The ideas included the following basic themes:

1. Augment the current \$5 million allocation for Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands grant awards.
2. Make grants that will complete the necessary planning, collaboration, and conceptual work for future projects that would then be ready to implement using funds from a range of possible sources.
3. Augment past grants supported by the SNC to ensure successful completion.
4. Administer a very small competitive grant round to target underrepresented grantee types in the Region.

The analysis considered factors such as: alignment with the current Strategic Plan and program focus areas, staff resources needed and available, ability to leverage additional funds and overall benefit to the Region.

Staff is recommending the theme in alternative 2, with a consideration of past SNC funding and involvement, be further refined to strategically target the funding, using a process which:

- Focuses on specific subject matter such as forest health and restoration activities that improve community well-being;

- Emphasizes projects with a clear path to on-the-ground implementation (for example, completing environmental documentation for projects with identified implementation funding);
- Leverages resources of other agencies and funding sources, to maximize benefits and outcomes; and,
- Builds on existing partnerships where SNC has a history of involvement.

Next Steps

Staff will confirm the total amount of funds currently remaining and further develop a proposal to bring to the Board at the March 2013 meeting, with the intent to bring guidelines to the Board for approval in June 2013. Staff is recommending that a committee of the Board be appointed to work with staff to further define and focus the plan.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board a) share their thoughts and comments as it relates to the approach for expending existing Proposition 84 funds; b) appoint a committee to work with staff to further refine and focus the plan to expend remaining Proposition 84 funds; and c) direct staff to prepare a more detailed proposal for the March 2013 meeting.