



## Board Meeting Minutes December 12, 2019 — Mill Creek, CA

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### 1. Call to Order

The Board meeting was called to order at 9:03 AM.

### 2. Oath of Office for New Board Members

Board Chair Terry O'Brien provided the Oath of Office for Bureau of Land Management representative Christopher Heppe.

### 3. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Paul Roen
- Sherri Brennan
- Susana Reyes
- Mary Rickert
- Bob Johnston
- Richard Anderson
- Stacy Corless
- Tom Wheeler
- John Brissenden
- Christopher Heppe
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Jennifer Montgomery
- Gayle Miller
- Danny Wan
- Barnie Gyant

**4. Approval of September 5, 2019, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Richard Anderson seconded, a motion to approve the September 5, 2019, meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Board Chair's Report**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien recognized the presenters at the tour yesterday stating that the work they are doing is a wonderful example of the work that needs to occur up and down the Sierra if we are to make progress on restoring forest health. Chair O'Brien also thanked Lynn Campbell, the North Central Subregion Area Representative, for her efforts to put together the tour agenda and speakers.

**6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

**Item 6a: Executive Officer Update**

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided thanks to the staff, Board, and partners for traveling to the Board meeting.

Avery informed the Board that Boardmember Danny Wan has notified the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) that he will be resigning from the Board. As a result of Boardmember Wan's resignation, SNC expects to have a Governor's appointment to the Board in the future.

Avery provided a Subregion representation rotation update. She informed the Board that Boardmember Sherri Brennan and Boardmember Tom Wheeler will be leaving the Board and Boardmember Paul Roen will be staying on the Board to help get the Subregional representation schedule back on track as outlined in the statutes. Avery reminded the Board that the actual county rotation is determined by the counties in that Subregion and not SNC. Avery then acknowledged the departing Boardmembers Brennan and Wheeler and thanked them for their time and commitment on the Governing Board.

Avery provided brief updates on the following topics:

- Potential Resilience Bond – SNC is tracking the Administration side of this bond. SNC staff will be providing input, which highlights SNC's priorities throughout the Region and highlights the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program as our overarching initiative, as appropriate and requested throughout the process.
- Avery discussed the possible SNC boundary expansion by Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance to include portions of Siskiyou and Shasta County. Avery provided the Board with a map and county resolutions for discussion and review. This boundary expansion would add about one million acres to the SNC Region.
- Avery was joined by SNC Attorney Jamie Sammut to provide an update on the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) work and pending lawsuit updates. Sammut informed the Board that since the last Board meeting, there

was a lawsuit filed against the NDRC project. It was filed by the Earth Island Institute, Sequoia ForestKeeper, Greenpeace, and James Hansen. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. Northern District, which is San Francisco, on September 24, 2019. On October 7, the temporary restraining order was denied, and the case was then transferred to the Eastern District, which is Sacramento and Fresno.

As a result of the denied restraining order and the transfer of the case, the group filed a motion for preliminary injunction in November. In response to this filing, SNC filed a declaration along with HCD's response, restating SNC's role in the project, the benefits we see in the project, and also rebuking some of the things that were not so factual that were being stated by the plaintiffs. Sammut reminded the Board that SNC is not an actual party to this lawsuit.

A hearing was held on December 3rd in Fresno. The judge did not rule from the bench and provided no time frame for the ruling. SNC is hoping to hear by early February. Right now, with the project, it's business as usual and staff will continue to update the Board when we do hear on the preliminary injunction.

Boardmember Brennan expressed the very time sensitive nature of these projects and encourages staff to continue to provide visual documentation of the successes and positive outcomes of these projects.

- Avery highlighted some of her achievements in 2019 and summarized some of the organizational changes and accomplishments. Avery noted with all the organizational changes, staff continued to push out over \$34 million in grant money and keep projects moving forward.

Avery recognized the staff and stated her enthusiasm moving forward.

Avery told the Board that the priorities for SNC as an organization will be focused on the Strategic Plan and the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program as the overarching initiative. Avery feels that the program areas identified in the strategic plan provide a vehicle to provide funding and programs to implement on-the-ground projects throughout the Region in meaningful ways. Avery continued to say that SNC will continue to work on three identified internal strategic goals: bring money into the Region, serve the Region by doing the right work at the right time, and continue to remain an efficient and effective organization. These internal goals will assist in the development of the new action plan that will be brought to the Board for approval in June and implemented in July.

Avery also told the Board that SNC has recommitted to a presence in Sacramento and continued time and work dedicated to the Sierra Nevada Strategic Investment Plan.

#### **Item 6b: Administrative Update**

Executive Officer Angela Avery directed the Board to the Administrative Update staff report in the Board packets and invited the Board to ask questions.

### **Item 6c: Policy and Outreach Update**

Policy and Outreach Branch Manager Brittany Covich provided the Policy and Outreach Update. Covich provided the following Policy updates:

- Staff is looking at pulling together a packet of information that will be helpful in educating legislative members and others about the value of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the work that we and our partners do in the Region.
- SNC participated in an Informational hearing held by Assembly Member Laura Friedman. Covich said that she had the opportunity to talk about SNC's efforts around supporting biomass utilization.
- Covich updated the Board on the legislation introduced by U.S. Senator Kamala Harris, the Wildfire Defense Act, which will help local communities defend against wildfire. SNC will track this bill and evaluate the SNC opportunities that could come with this new legislation.
- Avery and Elissa Brown participated in the California Economic Summit where a Call to Action on wildfire was launched by California Forward. Covich said that this call to action really emphasizes expanding restoration activities, developing wood product infrastructure, and creating thriving rural economies.
- Covich also provided the Board with an update on the Community Support and Partnerships Team saying that the team had concluded a series of interviews throughout the Region. These interviews/assessments were part of the WIP Capacity Block Grant and focused on capacity-building needs that different project partners in the Region had. The team has compiled the results of these interviews and the report has been published and is provided as a Board handout.

Boardmembers engaged in brief conversation about the potential for these capacity building programs and the benefits of the smaller organizations establishing independence which is the intent of the block grant funding.

Covich provided the following Communications updates:

- Covich provided the Board with an update of the Caples Fire prescribed fire project and burn. The weather circumstances and concerns with shifts in the fire burn patterns coupled with inaccurate media reports created some negative messaging. The SNC worked to clarify media reports and push out accurate and factual information around the burn. Covich stated that initial assessments indicate that it is likely the burn stayed within project boundaries and accomplished the ecological goals of that project. The SNC will continue to track the progress of the project.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around the messaging of controlled burns and Covich stated that the Communications unit will continue to develop and push out positive and factual messaging.

- Covich shared a trailer video from a video miniseries developed by the Communications team in November to mark the five-year anniversary of the King Fire. The first of three videos talked about the difference in the King Fire in burn severity and patch size compared with historic burn severity and patch size. The second video focused on fuel-driven fire behavior and what happened in the King Fire, and the third video really touched on the difference in post-fire restoration opportunities between treated and untreated areas in the burn perimeter.
- Covich announced the soft launch of SNC's new website.
- Plans have been discussed about the revival of the Sierra Day in the Capitol. Avery encouraged Boardmembers to reach out to Brittany if they are interested in participating.

Boardmembers engaged in discussion around the possibility of requiring grantees to document project successes by providing video or pictorial documentation. Avery noted that it would be very complicated to require past grantees to do this and suggested that if this were something SNC were to implement it would be a requirement moving forward.

#### **Item 6d: Field Operations & Grants Update**

Field Operations and Grants Branch Manager, Andy Fristensky provided the following updates:

- Fristensky addressed the previous conversation around requiring grantees to provide video or picture documentation of project work. Fristensky told the Board that each grantee is required to provide photos of the project area. Field Operations and Grants provides these photos and videos to the communications unit to tell the story and show progress of these projects.
- Proposition 84 Grant Update – As a result of the Delegation of Authority authorized by the Board in September 2017, SNC has authorized Grant Number 929 in the amount of \$63,998, to the Butte County Resource Conservation District.
- Fristensky said that he hopes to present the next Proposition 84 Grant Update which “should” complete expenditure of SNC's Proposition 84 Funding. Boardmember Tom Wheeler provided thanks to SNC saying that this funding is the perfect example of how SNC should be granting the money. Board Chair Terry O'Brien echoed the kudos provided by Boardmember Wheeler.

#### **7. Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair (ACTION)**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Tom Wheeler, Boardmember Richard Anderson, and Boardmember Susana Reyes nominated Terry O'Brien for Board Chair.

**Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Richard Anderson seconded, a motion to elect Terry O'Brien as Board Chair for 2020. The motion passed unanimously.**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Sherri Brennan and Boardmember Richard Anderson nominated Stacy Corless for Vice-Chair.

**Boardmember Sherri Brennan moved, and Boardmember Richard Anderson seconded, a motion to elect Stacy Corless as Board Vice-Chair for 2020. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **8. 2020 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)**

Avery referred the Board to the proposed 2020 Board meeting schedule and provided some background on the dates chosen. Boardmembers engaged in discussion about the proposed dates.

**ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Richard Anderson seconded, a motion to approve the Board meeting schedule for the calendar year 2020 with the modification of the December meeting to 10 - 11, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **9. Strategic Land Conservation Proposition 68 Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

Field Operations and Grants Branch Manager Andy Fristensky provided the Board with a brief background and overview of the five grants being recommended under the Strategic Land Conservation Proposition 68 Grant funds, noting that the recommendations are spread throughout the Region and total \$359,951. Project details and requested funding amounts were provided in the Board materials.

Fristensky provided a project summary for the following recommendations:

Project 1151-LC: Due Diligence for the Almanor Rail ROW Land Donation - \$74,906

Public Comment:

Carlos Espana, Almanor Recreation and Park District Volunteer Trails Coordinator, spoke on behalf of the Due Diligence for the Almanor Rail ROW Land Donation project. Espana provided background, highlights, and benefactors of this project.

#### **Item 9(a)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Tom Wheeler seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Due Diligence for the Almanor Rail ROW Land Donation (1151-LC) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$74,906 to the Almanor Recreation and Park District, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed unanimously.**

Project 1158–LC: Parks Ranch Strategic Land Conservation Easement - \$69,450

Public Comment:

Jeremiah Leibowitz, Conservation Director for the California Rangeland Trust, addressed the Board to speak on the current project recommended for funding. He provided some background and stated that SNC has previously worked with and funded projects under the California Rangeland Trust. The Rangeland Trust currently has approximately 333,000 acres under conservation easement around the state.

**Item 9(b)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Sherri Brennan moved, and Boardmember Mary Rickert seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Parks Ranch Strategic Land Conservation Easement (1158-LC) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$69,450 to the California Rangeland Trust, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed unanimously.**

Boardmembers engaged in conversation about public access, and county support and notification.

Project # 1164–LC: Lake Clementine Protection & Public Access Planning Project - \$75,000

Boardmembers engaged in conversation about the valuation of land, scoring criteria, map details, and mechanism to ensure ongoing maintenance and management. Further Boardmember conversation took place around the project evaluation process.

**Item 9(c)**

**ACTION: Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Richard Anderson seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Lake Clementine Protection & Public Access Planning Project (1164-LC) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$75,000 to the Placer Land Trust, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed with eleven votes in favor and Supervisor Tom Wheeler from Madera County voting against.**

Boardmember John Brissenden left the meeting at 12:54 PM and was not present for voting that took place after that time.

Project #1169–LC: Farnworth Ranch Conservation Easement - \$72,595

Public Comment:

Kristi Jamason, Feather River Land Trust, addressed the Board to provide background information on the ranch that is the subject of this planning project grant. Jamason spoke of the benefits of the ranch and the scenic byway that passes through the ranch.

Jamason provided thanks to the Board for considering planning grants and stated that planning money is often hard to come by.

Boardmembers engaged in brief conversation with Jamason and received some clarification on county support and project location.

**Item 9(d)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Richard Anderson moved, and Boardmember Tom Wheeler seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Office to file a Notice of Exemption for the Farnworth Ranch Conservation Easement (1169-LC) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$72,595 to the Feather River Land Trust, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed unanimously.**

Project #1179–LC: Madera Mariposa Working Lands Conservation Strategy

Public Comment:

Andy Fristensky read a letter prepared and submitted by Bridget Fithian, Executive Director of the Sierra Foothill Conservancy. The letter provided some background on the project, identified the benefits the grant would offer, and thanked the Conservancy Board for consideration of the grant.

**Item 9(e)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Madera Mariposa Working Lands Conservation Strategy (1179-LC) project, authorize a grant award in the amount of \$68,000 to the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed unanimously.**

**10. Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Proposition 68 Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

Field Operations and Grants Manager Andy Fristensky provided a brief background presentation and summary of recommended projects for the Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Proposition 68 Grant funds.

Project #1195–RC: Connected Communities – Trail Master Plan - \$360,525

Public Comment:

Greg Williams, Executive Director and founder of the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship, addressed the Board to provide background and benefits of the proposed trail project.

Boardmembers engaged in discussion about several aspects of Williams' work and organization, and suggested SNC highlight the project when opportunities to build infrastructure and resilience present themselves.

Laurel Harkness, Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance, addressed the Board to provide her organization's support of this project.

**ACTION: Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Sherri Brennan seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Connected Communities – Trails Master Plan (1195-RC), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$360,525 to Sierra Buttes Trails Stewardship, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **11. Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Proposition 68 Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)**

Field Operations and Grants Branch Manager Andy Fristensky provided a brief background presentation and summary of recommended projects for the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Proposition 68 Grant funds.

Project #1197 – RT: Eastern Shasta Recreation Plan - \$94,600

Boardmembers expressed support for the project.

Public Comment:

Garrett Costello, Watershed Coordinator at the Fall River Resource Conservation District, addressed the Board to provide background and benefits of this project.

Laurel Harkness, Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance, provided brief background and project benefit comments to the Board.

#### **Item 11(a)**

**ACTION: Boardmember Mary Rickert moved, and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Eastern Shasta Recreation Plan (1197-RT), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$94,600 to the Fall River Resource Conservation District, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation. The motion passed unanimously.**

Project #1198 – RT: Replacement of Dry Creek Bridge

Public Comment:

Garrett Costello, Watershed Coordinator at the Fall River Resource Conservation District, addressed the Board to provide support for this project.

**Item 11(b)**

**ACTION:** Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Mary Rickert seconded, a motion to 1) Authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Replacement of Dry Creek Bridge (1198-RT), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$116,751 to the Great Shasta Rail Trail Association, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation; and 2) Authorize the Executive Officer to file the required environmental compliance documents as needed for project implementation and completion. The motion passed unanimously.

**12. Distributing Proposition 68 Funding Across Priorities (ACTION)**

Deputy Executive Officer Julie Alvis provided a proposed plan to distribute Proposition 68 fund allocation. Alvis provided background and a summary of the staff recommendation adding that the recommendation is based on staff's understanding of the Region's needs. The recommended distribution is as follows: \$3 million to the Forest Health Program, \$1 million to the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Grant Program, and \$1 million to the Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Grant Program.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Stacy Corless seconded, a motion to 1) Authorize staff to allocate \$3,000,000 in Proposition 68 funds to implement the Forest Health Grant Program; 2) Authorize staff to allocate \$1,000,000 in Proposition 68 funds to implement the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Grant Program; and 3) Authorize staff to allocate \$1,000,000 in Proposition 68 funds to implement the Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Grant Program. The motion passed unanimously.

**13. Annual Report (ACTION)**

Communications Manager Isaac Silverman provided the Board with a brief background presentation and proposal for the current annual report.

**ACTION:** Boardmember Tom Wheeler moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded a motion to direct staff to 1) Draft a formal letter, as required by statute, and submit to the Secretary of California Natural Resources; and 2) Develop and distribute an educational and marketing component to the 2019 Annual Report. The motion passed unanimously.

**14. Boardmembers' Comments**

Board Chair Terry O'Brien acknowledged Boardmembers Sherri Brennan and Tom Wheeler for their service on the Board. O'Brien presented both Boardmembers with a departing gift from the Board.

Boardmember Brennan provided departing comments, saying that her continued advocacy for the SNC will continue.

Boardmember Wheeler complimented SNC staff and Boardmembers for all of the work that is accomplished.

#### **15. Public Comments**

Laurel Harkness, Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance, addressed the Board to express gratitude to the Board and staff for the work they do in the Region.

#### **16. Adjournment**

Chair O'Brien adjourned the meeting at 1:45 p.m.