



Board Meeting Minutes March 4, 2021

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Board Chair O'Brien amended the agenda to allow for the Oath of Office to be administered prior to roll call.

2. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Jessica Morse
- Nathan Magsig
- Susana Reyes
- Aaron Albaugh
- Bob Johnston
- Lori Parlin
- Ron Hames
- Paul Roen
- Richard Gillihan
- John Brissenden
- Rosemarie Smallcombe
- Steve Kuennen
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Christopher Heppe

3. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Board Chair Terry O'Brien administered the Oath of Office to Jessica Morse, California Natural Resources Agency Designee, Steve Kuennen, United States Forest Services, Supervisor Lori Parlin, Central Subregion Representative,

Supervisor Ron Hames, East Subregion Representative, and Supervisor Aaron Albaugh, North Subregion Representative.

4. Approval of December 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION: Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to approve the December 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, and Abstain – 3. The motion passed.

5. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Terry O'Brien addressed the Board and announced the upcoming Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Summit to be held on Monday, March 8, 2021.

Chair O'Brien also addressed upcoming meetings and stated that he hopes to return to in-Region meetings in September 2021.

6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery welcomed all new and existing Boardmembers.

Avery provided Boardmembers with an overview of the governor's expected \$1 billion Forest Resilience budget proposal. Avery said the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is identified for \$20 million in current year funding and \$50 million for budget year funding. Avery said that the current year funding would have a quick turnaround time so it would be incumbent upon the SNC to move quickly to encumber these funds. Avery said that SNC has completed "pre-work" to facilitate disbursement of these funds.

Avery provided legislative updates, which included a report on the Senate's proposed funding plan for wildfire and forest resilience that would increase funding across programs.

Avery also announced that the SNC has the potential to receive additional funds from the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. Avery said the Delegation of Authority presented for Board approval provides authority for the Executive Officer to enter into the agreements necessary to accept this funding.

Avery highlighted the revision of Senate Bill (SB) 208 (Dahle). This is a reintroduction of SB 989 from the previous legislative year that would expand the Sierra Nevada Conservancy boundary. This bill asks for the expansion to include the originally proposed boundary lines but also

includes Trinity County. This bill would add about 2 million acres to SNC's current 25 million-acre Region.

Avery also advised the Board that SNC will closely monitor travel and facility restrictions related to upcoming in-Region Board meetings. Avery acknowledged the overall desire to attend in-person meetings, but advised the Board that at this time, due to planning and time restraints, we will not be able to hold the June Board meeting in-Region.

b. Administrative Update

Administrative Services Division Chief Amy Lussier told the Board that this March marks the one-year anniversary since SNC staff has been working remotely. Lussier said that the recent lift of the stay-at-home order allows SNC staff to make occasional office visits as needed and area staff will now be able to travel.

Lussier told the board of recent updates to the office to ensure the safety of SNC employees and members of the public when in the office or traveling. Recent updates to the facilities include touchless faucets, toilets, and towel dispensers in the restrooms. Lussier also said that barriers will be installed at the front desk.

Lussier also announced the new hire, Austin Rasmussen, who will be providing office support and front desk duties while employee Denice Maberry is working on a temporary Contact Tracing Assignment.

Lussier provided a high-level review of the budget document provided in the Board materials. Lussier also provided a review of the future funding SNC expects to receive and the three new positions that will come with the additional funding. Lussier stated that if the Budget is approved and signed by the governor, the SNC will move quickly to fill the three new positions.

Lussier also told the Board that staff is tracking COVID-related expenses and will continue to pursue reimbursement for all these expenses.

c. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Branch Manager Brittany Covich provided an overview and current update to the Board. Covich outlined six legislative bills that would directly affect SNC. Covich also said that SNC is tracking two additional bond bills.

Covich provided additional policy updates, including updates on the state's newly named Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's recently released Action Plan, and two recent state policy workshops that were sponsored by or participated in by SNC Executive Officer Angela Avery.

Covich provided the Board with a 2020 Fire Season Update saying that the California Air Resources Board reported that statewide, the 2020 fire season produced over 115 million metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) which is triple the amount of CO₂ on record for any previous fire year. Other examples of a record-setting fire season were shared with the Board.

Covich announced the publication of the SNC Annual Report, which is a collaborative piece of work that contains science, strategy, and accomplishments within the Sierra Nevada Region.

Covich shared a video promoting a recent project that SNC funded. Covich said that the trailer and full video are available on SNC's social media outlets.

In response to a question by Boardmembers about the statewide reforestation strategy outlined in the Forest Management Task Force's Action Plan, Boardmember Steve Kuennen provided an update on the actions that the United States Forest Service (USFS) is taking to develop reforestation and restoration plans. Kuennen said that it is looking at long-term reforestation and restoration but it is also partnering with state and local agencies to work collaboratively. Kuennen said that the USFS continues to look to the future and ways it can support moving the state towards resilience.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around reforestation, the multiple agencies involved, and pathways to accomplishing this work collaboratively.

d. Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative Update

Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) Coordinator Erin Ernst provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation that provided a background and overview of science, pillars, and current efforts on the TCSI. This update referenced the recently completed *Framework for Resilience, Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative* publication provided in the Board materials.

Boardmembers engaged in extensive conversation around the need and actions being taken to accomplish the goals of TCSI.

7. 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Branch Manager Andy Fristensky outlined the staff report and the *DRAFT: 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines* provided in the Board meeting materials.

Fristensky highlighted the draft guideline priorities, eligible applicants, and eligible projects. Fristensky's review included examples of eligible projects as well as the evaluation criteria that would be used to evaluate grants.

Executive Officer Angela Avery advised the Board that once this funding is approved by the legislature, the goal will be to grant the funds as soon as possible.

Clarification was also provided regarding deadlines for applications. Fristensky stated that SNC would take applications on an ongoing basis and noted the internal deadline of April 30 that must be met in order to bring projects to the Board for consideration in July.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around timelines and evaluation criteria.

Boardmembers requested the definition of "restoration" (page 18 of the *DRAFT: 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines*) be changed from "restoring to a historical state" to "restore to previous historical ecological site conditions".

Public Comment: Tom Esgate, Lassen Fire Council – suggested the use of the term "historic ecological site condition" as a potential definition of the term "restoration" in the grant guidelines.

ACTION: Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded, a motion to approve (with the definition of "restoration" amended, to "historic ecological site condition) the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2021 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program, pending Budget Act approval, and appropriation of funds to SNC in the FY 2020-21 budget.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 11, Nay – 0, and Abstain – 1. The motion passed.

8. Executive Officer Authorization to Enter Agreements Related to Wildfire and Forest Resilience Proposal (ACTION)

Deputy Executive Officer Julie Alvis presented the Board with an overview of steps that staff has taken to develop the Executive Officer Authorization presented in this agenda item. Alvis stated that this delegated authority would apply only to agreements entered into with other state partners.

ACTION: Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Susana Reyes seconded, a motion to delegate authority to the Executive Officer to approve and execute grants and contracts consistent with the following criteria: 1) Are from programs included in the wildfire and forest resilience budget proposal 2) Meet the goals and objectives of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program 3) Comply with the program guidelines of the state program from which the grant or contract is awarded 4) Be reported on at

regularly scheduled Board meetings; and to report all new grants approved to the Board.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 12, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

Boardmember Nathan Magsig left the Board meeting at 12:10 p.m. (beginning of the lunch break).

9. Forest and Watershed Health Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt presented project details and a review of the recommendation for the two projects before the Board at this meeting.

- a) #1275, the Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project in Lassen and Plumas counties, in the amount of \$250,000 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment: Kaitlyn (full name inaudible), representing the Lassen Fire Safe Council, spoke regarding project #1275 and thanked the Board for consideration of the project. Kaitlyn stated that there have been 11 projects that have been previously funded by SNC and provided praise to SNC Area Representative Kristy Hoffman.

ACTION: Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Thompson Peak Initiative Planning project (1275), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$250,000 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 11, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

- b) #1276, the Fandango Planning Project to Restore over 20,000 acres in Modoc National Forest in Modoc County, in the amount of \$120,000 to the California Deer Association with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmembers discussed the project border and tribal inclusion.

ACTION: Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Fandango Planning Project to restore over 20,000 acres in Modoc National Forest (1276), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$120,000 to the California Deer Association, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 11, Nay – 0. The motion passed.

10. Roadmap to Resilience (INFORMATIONAL)

Ashley Conrad-Saydah, consultant with Spatial Informatics Group (SIG), hired by SNC to assist in providing recommendations for scaling lessons learned from the TCSI to the rest of the Sierra Nevada in support of the “Roadmap to Resilience,” presented a project update and initial observations.

Conrad-Saydah provided an overview of the TCSI program areas and the proposed SNC approach designed to achieve Board goals of increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration across the Sierra Nevada. The approach combines communication strategies, CEQA/NEPA coordination, SNC partnerships, and more focused efforts from SNC’s science and management teams to achieve the goal.

Process, framework, recommendations, and timelines were presented.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation providing feedback to assist SIG in finalizing their “Roadmap to Resilience” report.

11. Boardmembers’ Comments

No Boardmember comment at this time.

12. Public Comments

No public comment at this time.

13. Adjournment

The Board meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.