



Board Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2021—Virtual Meeting

Board Meeting

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Aaron Albaugh
- Heather Bernikoff
- John Brissenden
- Ron Hames
- Bob Johnston
- Jessica Morse
- Lori Parlin
- Susana Reyes
- Rosemarie Smallcombe
- Liz Berger
- Christopher Heppe
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Richard Gillihan
- Nathan Magsig
- Paul Roen (Roan joined the meeting after the 11:00 break.)

Board Chair Terry O'Brien stated that Boardmember Paul Roen might not be able to join the meeting because he was helping in the efforts to contain the wildfire near Loyalton.

3. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Angela Avery apprised the Board that the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) received \$20 million as part of Governor Newsom's Early Action Wildfire Budget Package. Avery then informed the Board that during the two-week open application period, SNC received 32 applications totaling over \$38 million in requests for \$19 million in available funds. Avery thanked SNC staff for the amazing job done evaluating and processing these applications in such a short turnaround.

Boardmember Jessica Morse shared a budget update stating that the governor's proposed budget package totals \$1.2 billion, \$536 million of this was budgeted for Early Action funds that the Board is considering today. Morse is optimistic that the full budget request will be awarded.

Morse also encouraged SNC to obtain the fast-track permit template used and developed by the California Vegetation Treatment Program.

4. Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Funding Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

Field Operations and Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky provided a PowerPoint presentation with a brief background of the grant program followed by project details and a review of each project recommendation. Staff recommended 15 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Funding Grant Program grants for a total of \$19,095,700.

a. Grant #1300

The West Fork Carson and Monitor Pass Project in Alpine County, in the amount of \$1,401,520 to the National Forest Foundation with a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notice of Exemption.

Boardmembers discussed the need for resources across the Region and restoration goals for both the Aspen and meadow portions of the recommended project.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the West Fork Carson and Monitor Pass Project (#1300), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,401,520 to the National Forest Foundation, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

b. Grant #1305

The Thompson Peak Initiative Bootsole Forest and Watershed Restoration Project in Lassen and Plumas Counties, in the amount of \$3,671,725 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc. with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff inquired about tribal engagement and if specific criteria or incentives are being offered within the grant guidelines. Fristensky responded that tribal notification of proposed projects is part of the SNC due diligence which extends beyond the requirements of CEQA or NEPA. Fristensky added that because of this outreach, the SNC has been able to connect tribal organizations with federal agencies that can offer additional resources to tribes.

Bernikoff also asked Fristensky about whether SNC tracks its communications with and responses from tribes. Fristensky responded that while he has noticed an increased response rate, it certainly is not at 100 percent.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Aaron Albaugh moved, and Boardmember Heather Bernikoff seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Thompson Peak Initiative Bootsole Forest and Watershed Restoration Project (#1305), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$3,671,725 to the Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc., and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

c. Grant #1312

The Concow Resilience Project: Implementation project in Butte County, in the amount of \$2,127,857 to the Butte County Resource Conservation District with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

While presenting the project summary, Fristensky told the Board that recent discussions with the applicant have resulted in an additional \$450,000 of leveraged funds from the United States Forest Service (USFS).

Boardmembers engaged in conversation about utilizing and sharing lessons learned from these types of projects. Fristensky mentioned that the USFS and Butte County Resource Conservation District (RCD) will be sharing lessons learned, which might inform future endeavors in the Sierra Nevada.

Avery also noted that SNC's participation in various collaboratives and partnerships across the Sierra Nevada create additional opportunities to share lessons learned.

Public Comment

Ryan Davy, District Silviculturist, Feather River Ranger District, thanked the Board for considering the project.

Action

Boardmember Susana Reyes moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Concow Resilience Project: Implementation project (#1312), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$2,127,857 to the Butte County Resource Conservation District, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed. Boardmember Aaron Albaugh was not present for this vote due to technical difficulties.

d. Grant #1314

The Sierra Brooks - Smithneck Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Project in Sierra County, in the amount of \$1,075,059 to the Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmembers engaged in discussion about mapping and the options and details that SNC requests or requires as part of the application process. Fristensky provided the Board with information related to mapping, site visits, and the monitoring program required by SNC. Avery also noted that SNC utilizes satellite data that is updated every three to six months. Boardmember Morse provided detail on the use of statewide Lidar projects and grants that may assist with targeted and high priority watershed protection projects in the future. Morse said that the SNC has been leading the way in utilizing these analytic tools to demonstrate the effects of treatment and project outcomes.

Public Comment

Annie Tipton, Sierra Valley RCD, provided written comment in support of the project which was read for the record. Tipton also thanked the Board for considering the project.

Action

Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Sierra Brooks - Smithneck Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Reduction Project (#1314), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,075,059 to the Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

e. Grant #1317

The Quincy Wildfire Protection Project in Plumas County, in the amount of \$433,280 to the Plumas County Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Board Chair Terry O'Brien asked if there will be individuals in the community volunteering to help with the project. Fristensky stated that the Plumas Fire Safe Council includes many volunteers from the community and noted that he is unsure whether volunteers are identified in the project application. Boardmember Lori Parlin noted that there are certification requirements for Firewise communities that document the work that is done by community members.

Public Comment

Hannah Hepner, Program Manager for Plumas County Fire Safe Council, thanked the Board for considering the project and stated that the bulk of the project is on land that is owed by a timber company which will provide a significant amount of match funds. Hepner also stated there will be a significant amount of community engagement on the project.

Action

Boardmember Ron Hames moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Quincy Wildfire Protection Project (#1317), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$433,280 to the Plumas County Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

f. Grant #1319

The Mohawk Valley Wildfire Resilience Project in Plumas County, in the amount of \$1,022,082 to the Feather River Resource Conservation District with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Mohawk Valley Wildfire Resilience Project (#1319), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,022,082 to the Feather River Resource Conservation District, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed. Boardmember Aaron Albaugh was not present for this vote due to technical difficulties.

g. Grant #1322

The Michigan Bluff Community Protection Project in Placer County, in the amount of \$3,042,670 to the National Forest Foundation with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Aaron Albaugh moved, and Boardmember Susana Reyes seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Michigan Bluff Community Protection Project (#1322), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$3,042,670 to the National Forest Foundation, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

h. Grant #1325

The Twofer Pillikin Fuels Reduction Project in El Dorado County, in the amount of \$1,255,225 to the Great Basin Institute with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation regarding downstream users that benefit from the work of SNC and how or whether these organizations reciprocate support. Ongoing maintenance of projects was also discussed.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Twofer Pillikin Fuels Reduction Project (#1325), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,255,225 to the Great Basin Institute, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

At approximately 11:00 a.m. Chair O'Brien called for a 10-minute break. Boardmember Albaugh left the meeting at 11:01 a.m. The meeting resumed at approximately 11:10 a.m. and O'Brien confirmed that a quorum was present.

Boardmember Paul Roen joined the meeting at 11:10 a.m. There was a short discussion regarding the wildfire near Loyalton and appreciation for Roen's efforts.

i. Grant #1327

The Trestle Mastication project in El Dorado County, in the amount of \$370,300 to the National Wild Turkey Federation with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

O'Brien expressed his appreciation for SNC partnering with the National Wild Turkey Federation and commented on the severity of the overgrown forests in the presentation.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Trestle Mastication project (#1327), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$370,300 to the National Wild Turkey Federation, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed. Boardmember Bob Johnston was not present for this vote due to technical difficulties.

j. Grant #1328

The Wagner Ridge Fuel Break project in Mariposa County, in the amount of \$607,782 to the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmember Smallcombe stated that Mariposa County values the partnership that it has with SNC on area projects.

Public Comment

Barbara Cone, Mariposa County FireSafe Council, thanked the Board for considering the project and spoke about the Council's sustained relationship with local tribal partners.

Action

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Wagner Ridge Fuel Break project (#1328), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$607,782 to the Mariposa County Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 9, Nay – 0, Abstain – 1. The motion passed.

k. Grant #1330

The Tiger Creek Fuel Break Enhancement Project in Amador County, in the amount of \$220,200 to the Amador Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Chair O'Brien noted the ongoing positive work happening in the project area.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Lori Parlin moved, and Boardmember Susana Reyes seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Tiger Creek Fuel Break Enhancement project (#1330), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$220,200 to the Amador Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

Boardmember Paul Roen left the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

l. Grant #1337

The Middle Fork American River Watershed Restoration Project in Placer County, in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the Placer County Water Agency with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmember Brissenden noted this was the first grant without letters of support and commended staff and partners for getting so much support for the other grants.

Chair O'Brien stated that there has been a lot of work done in this area and this is the type of project that needs to continue for forest health and wildfire protection in the state. O'Brien asked Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky why the cost per acre was so high for this project. Fristensky responded that the high cost is due to the location of the project.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Lori Parlin seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Middle Fork American River Watershed Restoration Project (#1337), authorize a grant

award in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the Placer County Water Agency, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

m. Grant #1338

The Rim Fire Plantation Thin / Biomass Treatment Project in Tuolumne County, in the amount of \$1,368,000 to the Stanislaus National Forest with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmember Bob Johnston asked staff to clarify if the project was thinning trees that were planted by the USFS and asked if feedback would be provided to the USFS regarding their pine planting protocols. Fristensky stated that the trees are from old USFS planting projects and the USFS has since changed their planting processes. Boardmember Liz Berger stated that Fristensky was correct and that the USFS has learned from the past and over time has transitioned to new planting processes.

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff asked about area tribal engagement for this project. Staff invited Jason Kuiken, USFS, to respond to Boardmember questions.

Public Comment

Jason Kuiken, USFS, Stanislaus National Forest, addressed the Board to provide clarification on reforestation and planting methods being used in this grant project and others. Kuiken stated that the USFS has a fantastic relationship with the Tuolumne band of Miwok (the Miwok also represent other tribes that are involved) and the tribe has been consulted on this project.

Action

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Heather Bernikoff seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Rim Fire Plantation Thin / Biomass Treatment project (#1338), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,368,000 to the Stanislaus National Forest, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

n. Grant #1341

The Big Chico Creek Forest Resilience Project in Butte County, in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the Butte County Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency.

Boardmember Lori Parlin and Boardmember Susana Reyes encouraged the training opportunities offered in this grant to be offered in future grants. Boardmember

Jessica Morse provided information about the pending Governor's budget, which will provide funding for job creation and workforce development.

Public Comment

Eli Goodsell, CSU, Chico Ecological Reserve, provided written comment in support of the project, which was read for the record.

Action

Boardmember Lori Parlin moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency for the Big Chico Creek Forest Resilience Project (#1341), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the Butte County Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

o. Grant #1343

The Forbestown Forest Resilience Project in Butte County, in the amount of \$500,000 to the Butte County Fire Safe Council with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Forbestown Forest Resilience Project (#1343), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$500,000 to the Butte County Fire Safe Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

5. Boardmembers' Comments

Board Chair O'Brien provided thanks to the SNC staff for the work done to process the grants and get the projects moving. Boardmembers Hames, Smallcombe, Brissenden, and Berger echoed the Chair's comments and provided thanks for all the work to move the projects forward.

Boardmember Jessica Morse provided thanks to SNC and said that SNC is part of a much larger picture with all state agencies dispatching this on-the-ground, immediate funding. Morse also thanked SNC for being the model and leader.

Boardmember Susana Reyes also expressed the need for the Board to support these projects as they continue and require monitoring.

6. Public Comments

No public comment.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

Additional Information

Meeting materials are available on the [SNC website](http://sierranevada.ca.gov) (sierranevada.ca.gov). For additional information, or to submit written comment on any agenda item, please contact Ms. Armstrong at (530) 721-0018, or via email to tristyn.armstrong@sierranevada.ca.gov; in person or by mail at: 11521 Blocker Drive, Suite 205, Auburn CA 95603. For reasonable accommodations, including documents in alternative formats, please contact Ms. Armstrong at least **five (5)** working days in advance.