



Board Meeting Minutes June 3, 2021 — Virtual Meeting

Board Meeting

1. Call to Order

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

2. Oath of Office for New Board Members

Board Chair Terry O'Brien gave the Oath of Office to the newest Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Boardmembers; Heather Bernikoff, Governor's Office Appointee, and Elizabeth Berger, United States Forest Service (USFS) designee.

3. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Aaron Albaugh (joined at 10:12 a.m.)
- Heather Bernikoff
- John Brissenden
- Ron Hames
- Nathan Magsig
- Jessica Morse
- Lori Parlin
- Susana Reyes
- Paul Roen
- Rosemarie Smallcombe
- Liz Berger
- Christopher Heppe
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Robert Johnston
- Richard Gillihan

4. Approval of March 4, 2021, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

ACTION:

Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to approve the March 4, 2021, Meeting Minutes.

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

5. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Terry O'Brien welcomed the Board to another virtual Board meeting.

Chair O'Brien announced that plans have begun for the September in-person Board meeting.

6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Item 6a: Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery welcomed Board members and thanked the five County Supervisor Boardmembers that participated in a wildfire funding benefits and preparedness video series that the SNC put together on very short notice.

Avery provided the Board with an update on the applications for the \$20 million in Early Action Funding saying that grant guidelines were released the same day as the governor's funding announcement. Avery told the Board that the SNC received 32 proposals for \$38 million, noting that staff has been working hard to evaluate and prepare application packages for Board approval in July. Avery thanked the Field Operations, Grants Management, and Communications teams for their work to push these projects forward.

Avery discussed the \$50 million in Early Action Funding the Department of Conservation (DOC) received for the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program (RFFCP). Avery reminded the Board that this program was modeled on the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program. The SNC expects to receive \$7.77 million in RFFCP money and is currently working on the scope of work for this interagency agreement. Staff anticipates this scope of work to be completed by the end of July. The SNC will apply funding in two very broad categories. The first category will provide Regional subgrants to support capacity building, planning, environmental studies, and project support; the second category will support the costs SNC incurs related to implementing the program.

Avery said that Governor Newsom announced the California Comeback Plan that includes funding for Sierra Nevada Wildfire Resilience, and she is hopeful that SNC will receive another \$50 million to fund forest health and fuel reduction programs. Avery also said that SNC is watching another budget line item which may provide an additional \$50 million to DOC to establish a biomass gasification facility in the Sierra Nevada. Avery told the Board that these increases in investment in the Sierra Nevada is a clear demonstration that the administration is beginning to understand the scope of the issues plaguing the Region.

Avery provided the Board with an update on Senate Bill 208 which is co-authored by Senators Dahle and Laird. This bill proposes a potential boundary and name change for SNC. The bill passed the Senate and will now move forward to the Assembly. The last day for the bill to come out of the house is September 10 and the governor's deadline is October 10.

Avery provided an update on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Bagley-Keene Act, and on related Executive Orders that effect virtual and in-person meetings and return to work. Avery said that many of these issues involve other state agencies, so staff are waiting for more information. Avery said that SNC staff is currently moving forward with an in-person Board meeting in September though this is subject to change.

Avery provided the Board with an update on the Roadmap to Resilience program and the related Spatial Informatics Group (SIG) report that was presented to the Board and the last meeting. Avery said that the next steps include a staff review of the SIG recommendation and feedback will be gathered on the recommendations. Actionable items will be compiled based on the SNC staff review and feedback. Staff may present the Board with the final SIG report and a list of SNC action items at the September meeting.

Item 6b: Administrative Update

Deputy Executive Officer Amy Lussier provided the Board with an update on the Administrative Division functions and tasks. Lussier told the Board that the budget continues to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which includes accommodations for continued work in the virtual world. Lussier used travel as an example of budget/spending changes due to COVID-19 stating that there has been about \$73,000 less spent on travel than in previous years.

Lussier told the Board that SNC continues to support events in the Region noting that, in the past fiscal year, SNC spent \$19,000 in event sponsorships. Lussier reminded the Board that the budget provided in the Board package was prepared in March. She updated the Board with some adjusted percentages for spending saying that with one month left in the Fiscal Year, SNC has spent 92 percent of its budget.

Lussier told the Board that SNC is waiting for CalHR to issue a Telework Policy so management can move forward with future decisions related to return to work, virtual workspaces, and travel.

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe asked about additional funding for staffing to accommodate additional workload related to new funding coming to SNC. Lussier said that SNC has authorization for three new positions and management is looking at how to best utilize these positions.

Boardmembers engaged in further conversation about plans for return-to-work guidelines and policies related to the pandemic.

Item 6c: Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation which included a legislative update. Covich said that SNC is currently tracking bills that may directly affect SNC including SB 208, SB 624, and AB 642.

Covich said SNC is also tracking other key bills such as SB 604, SB 456, AB 9, SB 45, and AB 1500.

Covich told the Board that Julia Hart recently accepted an analyst position within SNC and will now be reporting to the Administration Division. Covich said Hart will be missed and thanked her for her critical work and contributions to the Policy & Outreach Division.

Covich provided a Policy update by highlighting a few Regional workshops. Covich said that the California Natural Resources Agency hosted several Regional workshops in the Sierra Nevada that were designed to help inform the Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy and the Pathways to 30x30 document. Several other workshops opportunities were listed including the SNC co-hosted Regional Nature Based Solutions Workshop with the Nature Conservancy for the Sierra Cascades Region. Covich said that there are multiple upcoming opportunities to weigh in on State policy as it relates to natural and working lands.

Covich provided examples of “The Sierra Spotlight” posts and said that the platform has provided an outlet for the SNC to share its voice throughout the Region and beyond. Covich also shared an update on the recent video series that was developed with the County Supervisor Boardmembers on the value of state wildfire and forest resilience funding in the Sierra Nevada.

Item 6d: Field Operations & Grants Update

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky provided special recognition to the Field Operations & Grants team and the many Regional partners that SNC works with for the work completed to roll out the early action grant money.

Fristensky provided updates on two recent land conservation grants awarded by the Board. He also provided status updates on grants that are currently being implemented or have recently closed out and said that SNC is currently managing 120 active grants.

7. Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided a PowerPoint presentation with a brief program background followed by a review of each project summary and staff recommendation. Staff recommended a total of two Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Awards for a total of \$270,581.

- a) #1277, the Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan project in Tuolumne County, in the amount of \$70,581 to the Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts of America, with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

ACTION:

Boardmember Nathan Magsig moved, and Boardmember Paul Roen seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Camp Hi-Sierra Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan project (#1277), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$70,581 to the Silicon Valley Monterey Bay Council, Boy Scouts

of America, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

- b) #1280, the Forest Projects Plan in Amador, Calaveras, and Alpine counties, in the amount of \$200,000 to the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

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 Forest Projects Plan project (#1280), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$200,000 to the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Authority, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

8. Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Program Directed Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided a PowerPoint presentation with a brief program background followed by a review of the project summary and staff recommendation. Staff recommended a total of one Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Award for a total of \$221,000.

- a) #1279-RT, The Colby Mountain Recreation Area project in Lassen County, in the amount of \$221,000 to the Butte County Resource Conservation District with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Doug Teeter, Butte County Supervisor – Supervisor Teeter provided written comment which was read for the record.

Thad Walker, District Manager of Butte County RCD – Mr. Walker addressed concerns about tribal engagement and review while implementing and developing the project. Walker thanked the Board for their consideration of the project.

ACTION:

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember John Brissenden seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Colby Mountain Recreation Area project (#1279-RT), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$221,000 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 – 11, Nay – 0, and Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

9. 2020-21 Action Plan Reporting (INFORMATIONAL)

Chief Deputy Executive Officer Julie Alvis provided a review of the staff report provided in the Board materials. Alvis shared a video with the Board which highlighted the many accomplishments of SNC during the 2020-21 Action Plan period. Alvis said that overall, the SNC achieved the 47 standalone actions that were identified in the plan. Two of the identified actions were not achieved due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19.

10. 2021-22 Action Plan (ACTION)

Chief Deputy Executive Officer Julie Alvis outlined the draft 2021-22 Action Plan provided in the Board meeting materials. Alvis said that this Action Plan was designed to work with, and make progress on, the five-year Strategic Plan which runs from 2019-2023. The Plan also supports the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Plan goals. Alvis said that the structure of this action plan supports the SNC mission and is in alignment with SNC Core Functions. Alvis said this plan also leaves room for flexibility and adaptability for unforeseen emerging situations. The PowerPoint presentation provided by Alvis highlighted standalone activities for each of the SNC divisions.

ACTION:

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Nathan Magsig seconded, a motion to approve the draft 2021-22 Action Plan and direct staff to take the necessary actions for its successful implementation.

After a roll call vote, the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 1, and Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

11. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Nathan Magsig brought to the Board's attention a current lawsuit that could affect SNC projects and work moving forward. Boardmembers and SNC staff engaged in conversation around this and any future lawsuits that may come up in the future.

Boardmember Paul Roen provided a brief update about the Loyalton Facility stating that by June they are hopeful to be "sawing logs."

Boardmember Liz Berger thanked the Board for welcoming her and thanked SNC staff for the partnerships and professionalism they have provided as she's settled into in her new role.

Boardmember Jessica Morse commended the SNC staff and team for "driving so hard" on the early action dollars that are being distributed to SNC. Morse emphasized the importance of this early funding and timing. Morse asked that the Board continue to advocate for the additional increase of \$1.2 billion so that SNC can continue to make an impact.

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff provided thanks to Board Chair O'Brien and Boardmembers as well as the SNC staff for the work that they do in the Region. Bernikoff also said that she looks forward to working with SNC in the future. Bernikoff provided these remarks in her native language and translated the remarks for the record.

12. Public Comments

David Goldemberg, District 1 Supervisor in Tuolumne County, currently the Tuolumne County Board Representative to the SNC – Goldemberg introduced himself to the Board and provided his background as it relates to the work SNC does. Goldemberg provided thanks and appreciation for the work that SNC does and is looking forward to being more involved with SNC in the future.

13. Adjournment

Executive Officer Angela Avery announced to the Board that SNC received confirmation that it can hold the interim July 15 meeting virtually.

Board Chair Terry O'Brien adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.