



Board Meeting Minutes December 9, 2021 – Virtual Meeting

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Heather Bernikoff
- John Brissenden (left meeting at 11:15 a.m.)
- Ron Hames
- Bob Johnston (joined meeting at 9:11 a.m.)
- Nathan Magsig
- Jessica Morse
- Susana Reyes
- Paul Roen
- Rosemarie Smallcombe (left meeting at 1:24 p.m.)
- Elizabeth Berger
- Christopher Heppe
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Aaron Albaugh
- Lori Parlin
- Richard Gillihan

3. Approval of September 2, 2021, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Public Comment

No public comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to approve the September 2, 2021, Meeting Minutes.

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

**Boardmember Bob Johnston was absent from this vote.*

4. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Terry O'Brien acknowledged the three Board members who will be leaving the Board at the end of this year: Boardmember Paul Roen, Boardmember Nathan Magsig, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe. Each Boardmember provided departing comments.

Board Chair O'Brien acknowledged the very intense fire season and thanked all the various agencies who provided support with their heroic and dangerous efforts to fight the fires. O'Brien invited Boardmember Jim Richardson, representing the National Park Service to comment on the Dixie Fire. Richardson provided some final fire-burn statistics saying that this was the second largest California forest fire in modern history. Richardson said that while 69 percent of Lassen National Park burned, 60 percent of this area burned at low intensity. Richardson said that many facilities were protected due to previous forest treatments and structure hardening.

5. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided the Board with a 2021 year in review, highlighting Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) funding successes:

- Received \$20 million in General Fund for "Early Action" funding. This grant program was developed, projects were developed, funds were awarded, and contracts were executed faster than any other grant program in the history of the SNC. These projects included the largest forest health treatment project to date.
- Received \$50 million in General Fund in the 2021 Budget Act for forest health, fuel reduction, and recovery projects. Grant Guidelines for the first half of this funding have been developed and are in front of the Board for approval today.
- Received \$11.1 million in General Fund in the 2021 Budget Act for broader implementation of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) pillars. Guidelines will be brought forward early next year.
- Received a Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program early action grant from the Department of Conservation in the amount of \$7.7 million. Work is still being completed on the interagency agreement that will allow SNC to

subgrant these funds, which will be used to build capacity across the Sierra Nevada Region.

- Received a \$500,000 investment from the United States Forest Service for SNC internal capacity building and linking to resilience pillars.

With respect to future funding, all eyes are watching the expected budget surplus once again and SNC hopes to continue to receive additional funds.

The SNC's baseline operations budget has been fully allocated and no changes to the funding for next year are expected.

Avery provided an update on Senate Bill (SB) 208 Boundary Expansion. Avery provided a brief overview of this expansion stating that it will add nearly 2 million acres to the original boundary and allow SNC to increase the pace and scale of science-based ecological restoration with the goal of improving the health of the surrounding watershed. Avery advised the Board that they should expect additional discussions in the coming year with questions and discussions as it relates to the legislation. Avery stated that she, Andy Fristensky, and Tuli Potts have provided an initial presentation to the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors.

To provide a grant amendment update, Avery introduced Jonathan Kusel, Sierra Institute for Community and the Environment. Kusel thanked the Board and shared some photos of the results of the modified grant, which is in the Dixie Fire burn area. Kusel emphasized the importance of the SNC grant to the area. This Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities grant is in the category of wood utilization for biomass, and some funding will be repurposed to include a sawmill. Kusel expressed his appreciation for the efficiency of the SNC staff in processing this grant. Kusel showed pictures of a mill that was up and running in a timely manner, cutting timber harvested from the Dixie Fire burn area. This mill is generating a product of value and the lumber will be used to rebuild the community of Greenville and to provide free timber to assist rebuilding.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around projects like the one that Kusel spoke about. Boardmembers also discussed future funding options and the benefits of these recovery-based projects.

b. Administrative Update

Deputy Executive Officer, Administration, Amy Lussier provided the Board with an announcement of new staff member Geurrine Bean who will be working as an administrative team member in the Human Resources area. On the personnel front, next week the Grants & Reimbursements Unit will be conducting interviews to fill a new vacancy. Lussier will update the Board in March on the third position SNC received with the new funding.

Lussier provided an update on the COVID-19 requirements within the office stating that not much has changed since the previous Board report. The SNC has completed the documentation of employee vaccination status and has implemented a weekly testing program for those who are not vaccinated. Scheduling staff to work in the office is still part of the standard practice and will continue through the end of January. The SNC will be implementing a new standard telework policy by February 1, 2022. The SNC has drafted a Telework policy which is based on the Department of General Services (DGS) model policy. The draft policy has been submitted to DGS for review and approval.

Lussier also provided the Board with a very brief facilities update stating that the headquarters office located in Auburn is in the process of clean-up and paint.

Lussier provided a quick budget review which included a review of the budget report provided to the Boardmembers in the meeting materials.

c. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich advised of a typo in Board materials, stating that Assembly Bill (AB) 627 should be AB 267. Covich noted that the materials have been updated online.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) recently participated in the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Climate Crisis Resources, Energy, and Transportation informational hearings to discuss the progress of the \$1.5 billion in funds that have been rolling out across the state. Covich said that the Legislative Analyst's Office and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) representatives stated that these projects take time and emphasized the need for active reforestation, development of recovery plans, workforce development in suppression and reforestation areas, and emphasized the need to keep the momentum going. Boardmember Jessica Morse followed Covich by highlighting the expedited work of the various CNRA departments to get the funds out on-the-ground and stated that SNC needs to sustain the speed of implementation to meet the scale goals.

Covich provided a high-level review of the Policy Platform document (Attachment A) provided to the Boardmembers as part of the December Board meeting materials. Covich told the Board that this document was designed to be used as a document highlighting the areas the SNC expects to engage in on behalf of the Region, but not as a definitive outline of what SNC will be doing. Boardmembers engaged in conversation around this document and its broad range of ideas and approaches.

Covich said staff continues to work with and participate in several technical, scientific, and collaborative groups. Covich provided a PowerPoint presentation with photos of field work in the Region and said the team continues to gather these photos and work with Boardmembers and partners to tell stories of the Region.

Avery reminded Boardmembers of the Feather River Watershed Fire .gif as an example of the impact the work the Communications Team has in the Region. Avery said the Department of Water Resources, specifically, is a key organization that has come to understand the importance of the Region to the state. Boardmembers engaged in conversation around ideas for additional outreach in the Region.

Covich told the Board that the 2021 Annual Report is being worked on and will be released in the new year. Covich also said that the Policy & Outreach Division is working on the content for the 2022 Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program Summit, which will have a focus on post-fire recovery.

d. Field Operations & Grants Update

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky provided the Board with a summary of recent division accomplishments.

Fristensky told the Board that recent grant amendments have taken a substantial amount of time for the team. Fristensky provided the Board with a brief background of the grant amendment process and provided examples of factors and issues that that would affect a project and require an amendment. Fristensky continued to summarize recent grant amendments that have been processed by the Field Operations & Grants Division. Fristensky said three of the 15 Immediate Action Wildfire and Forest Resilience Directed Grants awarded in July had been affected by the 2021 wildfire season. Fristensky said that two of these projects will require amendments and one of the grantees has dropped out entirely.

Fristensky said that the Grants Unit continues to work on CAL FIRE grant agreement amendments needed due to COVID-19 and impacts from fire. These amendments will shift funding and provide timeline extensions.

6. Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair (ACTION)

Boardmember John Brissenden nominated Terry O'Brien to serve as the Board Chair for the 2022 calendar year.

Public Comment:

No public comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember John Brissenden moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to elect Terry O'Brien as Board Chair for 2022.

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

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe nominated Ron Hames to serve as the Board Vice-Chair for the 2022 calendar year.

Public Comment:

No public comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe moved, and Boardmember Nathan Magsig seconded, a motion to elect Ron Hames as Board Vice-Chair for 2022.

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

7. 2022 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided the Board with the proposed Board Meeting Schedule for 2022.

Public Comment:

No public comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Heather Bernikoff seconded, a motion to approve the 2022 Board meeting schedule as follows:

- March 2 – 3, 2022, Sacramento
- June 1 – 2, 2022, East Subregion (Mono County)
- September 7 – 8, 2022, North Subregion (Shasta County)
- December 8 – 9, 2022, South-Central Subregion (Mariposa County)

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 7, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

**Boardmember Robert Johnston, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe were absent for this vote. Boardmember John Brissenden left the meeting at 11:15 a.m.*

11. Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council Update and Executive Officer Authorization (ACTION)

Due to guest speaker availability, this item was heard after agenda item 7.

Grants & Reimbursements Manager Shannon Ciotti provided the Board with a brief background and a status update on the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council grant agreement and Executive Officer Authorization. This PowerPoint (PPT) presentation provided a review of the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding and the proposed SNC Responsibilities under the grant agreement being developed, which include: 1) holder of Conservation Covenants over certain Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) lands donated to the Forest Service; 2) Approve Successor Conservation Easement Holders; 3) Administer the Enhancement Grant

Program; and 4) Provide a report to the California Public Utilities Commission on the impacts of the PG&E Land Conservation Commitment.

Ciotti's PPT presentation also included a high-level review of the financial structure and stated that the agreement would be clear that SNC's responsibility to undertake activities under the grant agreement would last only as long as there were sufficient funds available. Ciotti also provided a note on timing, stating that dependent on the Board action, a grant agreement would be developed in early 2022 and would be effective July 1, 2022. Ciotti also provided a review of the SNC requested action as outlined in the December 9, 2021, Board meeting materials.

Boardmember discussion took place related to future funding, ongoing responsibilities, and detailed grant agreement parameters. Stewardship Council representative Erin Healy spoke on behalf of the Council and provided clarification and addressed the concerns of the Board.

Public Comment:

No public comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Rosemarie Smallcombe seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to finalize and execute a new grant agreement between the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council and SNC and to take all steps necessary to implement the activities to fulfill SNC's responsibilities as set forth in the grant agreement.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 8, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

**Boardmember Nathan Magsig was absent for this vote.*

8. Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grants Program 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 one Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grant Award for a total of \$1,105,278.

a. #1282

The Grant Grove Big Stump Ecological Restoration Project, Phase Two submitted by the Great Basin Institute in the amount of \$1,105,278 with a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment:

No public comment at this time.

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 Grant Grove Big Stump Ecological Restoration Project, Phase Two (#1282), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$1,105,278 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 – 8, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

**Boardmember Nathan Magsig was absent for this vote.*

9. Grant # 1061 Tramway Road Fuel Break Network Project CEQA Addendum (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided a PowerPoint presentation with a brief project background followed by a status, detailed addendum information, and staff recommendation, as outlined in the December 9, 2022, Board meeting materials.

Public Comment:

No comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember Paul Roen moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve as a Responsible Agency the Addendum I: Tramway Road/South Component to the Tramway Road/A-Line Road/F-Line/Road 90A Shaded Fuel Break Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration approved at the October 20, 2021, Resource Conservation District of Tehama County Board Meeting, and direct SNC staff to take the necessary actions for successful project implementation.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 8, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

**Boardmember Nathan Magsig was absent for this vote.*

10. 2022 Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Management Division Chief Andy Fristensky provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of the 2022 Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines. The presentation highlighted project eligibility guidelines which have been extended to the newest portions of the SNC Region: Siskiyou, Shasta and Trinity counties. Fristensky provided the Board with several “project examples” which included acquiring permits for a specific, future on-the-ground project(s), analyses required to support CEQA

and/or National Environmental Policy Act, and post fire recovery from firefighting in sensitive natural environments.

Fristensky wrapped up his presentation with an outline of the proposal, development, and evaluation process which included evaluation criteria.

Boardmembers were provided with a draft copy of the 2022 Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Grant Guidelines as part of the December 9, 2022, Board Meeting materials package.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation regarding the level of detail pertaining to specific disadvantaged communities and the possibility of including certain state contracting provisions pertaining to disadvantaged and small businesses in the guidelines.

It was suggested that the guidelines be approved as is, and staff will follow up with the Boardmembers directly regarding disadvantaged and small businesses and inclusion of certain state contracting requirements.

Public Comment:

No public comment at this time.

Action

Boardmember Susana Reyes moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2022 Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Guidelines and authorize staff to implement the program.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 8, Nay – 0, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

** Boardmember Paul Roen was absent from this vote.*

12. 2021 Fire Season Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Regional Scientist Nic Enstice provided a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of the 2021 fire season. Enstice highlighted high-severity burn areas in the Dixie, Caldor, Tamarac, and Beckwourth Complex fire burn areas. Enstice recapped his presentation stating that in the last two years a total of 2.7 million acres have burned in the Region and, of those, approximately 1 million acres were conifer forests that burned at high severity.

Enstice introduced guest speaker, Zeke Lunder, website owner, The Lookout. Lunder presented to the Board sharing a video discussing the forest effects of the Dixie Fire. This video showed fire severity in the Dixie Fire burn area and the effects treatment might or might not have had on this burn area. Lunder continued to

discuss different approaches to forest management and post-fire forestry prospects for this fire and others like it.

13. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Ron Hames made brief comments concerning the effects of fire on wildlife and the dangerous interaction that is happening as a result.

Boardmember Paul Roen also expressed the importance of remaining proactive to protect the forest and watersheds in the Region.

14. Public Comments

Letter submitted via email – Laura Rosenburger Haider – Comments concerning forest management.

Supervisor Ed Valenzuela, Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors – Supervisor Valenzuela addressed the Board to thank Executive Officer Angelia Avery and the SNC staff for attending the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors meeting to discuss the recently passed SB 208 Boundary Expansion and is looking forward to working with SNC.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

Additional Board Materials

- Key Meetings and Presentations
- Letters of Support
- News Articles