



Board Meeting Minutes March 3, 2022 – Virtual Meeting

1. Call to Order

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

2. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Board Chair Terry O'Brien administered the Oath to South Subregion Boardmember and Kern County Supervisor Phillip Peters, South Central Subregion Boardmember and Amador County Supervisor Brian Oneto, and North Central Subregion Boardmember and Plumas County Supervisor Dwight Ceresola.

3. Roll Call

Present:

- Terry O'Brien
- Aaron Albaugh
- Heather Bernikoff
- John Brissenden
- Dwight Ceresola
- Ron Hames
- Bob Johnston
- Jessica Morse
- Brian Oneto
- Lori Parlin
- Phillip Peters
- Susana Reyes
- Elizabeth Berger
- Christopher Heppe
- Jim Richardson

Absent:

- Richard Gillihan

4. Approval of December 9, 2021, Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to approve the December 9, 2021, Meeting Minutes.

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

5. Board Chair's Report

Board Chair Terry O'Brien provided brief comments regarding the previous day's Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) Summit. O'Brien expressed his appreciation to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff for putting the Summit together and said he was pleased to see that Assemblymember Jim Wood participated in the event.

6. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided a welcome to the newest Boardmembers and a summary and overview of the WIP Summit which took place on March 2, 2022. Avery stressed the need for a more holistic approach to fire recovery in the Region. Avery also provided her thanks and appreciation to the SNC staff who assisted with the Summit. She announced that a recording of the Summit will be made available on the SNC website.

Avery provided Boardmembers with a brief review and summary of the March Agenda items and told the Board that the SNC is moving forward with in-person meeting plans for June.

Deputy Executive Officer Julie Alvis provided the Board with a status update on the current Sierra Nevada Conservancy Delegation of Authority. Alvis explained to the Board that a potential part of the update process would be for the Board to form an Advisory Committee to assist and advise during this recommendation and revision process.

Board Chair Terry O'Brien and Boardmember Susana Reyes indicated a willingness to serve as the two-member Delegation of Authority advisory committee.

b. Administrative Update

Deputy Executive Officer, Administration, Amy Lussier reviewed the administrative staff report and the budget information provided in the June meeting materials package.

Lussier advised the Board that SNC is amid a compliance review administered by the State Personnel Board (SPB). Lussier told the Board that this review takes place every three years to determine SNC's compliance with SPB rules and regulations. An area of concern that has surfaced during this review was that not all of the Boardmembers have completed the state mandated Ethics Training Course. Lussier advised the Board that failure to complete this training may result in an audit finding for the SNC and encouraged all Boardmembers to complete the training as requested.

Lussier also provided a staffing update, saying that SNC has recently lost two valued employees, Nic Enstice and Andrea Williams, noting that SNC will be filling behind these positions as soon as possible. Lussier announced two recently filled positions, Grants Program Coordinator Lorie Soltero, and Tribal Engagement Specialist Waylon Coats. Lussier also announced published job announcements for a legal counsel position and a Geographic Information System position. She also noted that three new positions will be available to SNC in July due to the recently passed boundary expansion legislation Senate Bill (SB) 208.

Lussier provided a budget update and provided information about the allocations received and money spent for each grant funding pot of money.

c. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich shared a WIP Summit update showing that participation averaged 160 people throughout the event. Covich noted that participants included partners key to wildfire recovery efforts, as well as other Regional partners and policymakers. Covich reminded Boardmembers that the purpose of the WIP Summit is to elevate the needs, challenges, and goals of the Region with policymakers. The goal of the 2022 Summit was to communicate the full spectrum of recovery, which includes community engagement, economic development, workforce development, and several other activities. Covich told the Board that the WIP Summit recording will be posted and the link to that posting will be shared with the Board.

Covich provided a policy update which included a summary of legislative bills being tracked by SNC staff.

The SNC has reviewed and provided feedback to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) on the Pathways to 30x30 policy document and some of the ways the SNC can assist with informing the plan. The CNRA will

also be launching a statewide listening tour to help inform the long-term strategy for the Outdoors for All initiative. The SNC will continue to track these key policies.

Covich provided a Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program update, stating that SNC has received a fair amount of positive feedback from partners who have benefitted from support provided through the allocation of the block grant from the Department of Conservation. These funds are intended to build capacity in the Region. Covich shared a series of quotes provided by partners sharing some successes and results from funds received.

Covich provided a communications update stating that the 2021 Annual Report was published and announced SNC media engagement with outlets such as the Los Angeles Times, and other traditional media outlets.

Boardmembers engaged in conversation around SNC's messaging to the legislature.

7. Boundary Expansion Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation (PPT) reviewing the SB 208 chaptered legislation and listing tasks completed by staff. Avery also provided a review of the timeline and the outstanding action items, which includes Board engagement. She suggested the formation of an advisory committee of the Board to assist staff with the development of the recommendations associated with the boundary expansion.

Boardmembers Ron Hames and Heather Bernikoff volunteered to engage with SNC staff as a two-member advisory committee.

8. Vibrant Recreation and Tourism and Strategic Land Conservation Grant Program Guidelines (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Management Division Chief Andy Fristensky highlighted the background, key updates, scoring criteria, and special considerations that may be given for the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism and Strategic Land Conservation Grant Program Guidelines (Guidelines).

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff recommended that a link to SNC's Tribal Relations information on the website be included within the "Engagement with California Native Tribes" section (pg. 9) in both sets of the Guidelines. Bernikoff also suggested that the wording in several sections of the Guidelines be updated to be more inclusive of all tribal entities.

Boardmembers engaged in extensive conversation around the grant Guidelines, project selection and prioritization, and provided several perspectives from the county, state, and federal level.

Boardmember Aaron Albaugh requested of Chair O'Brien that this action item be split into three separate parts and votes.

Public Comment

Lauren Miller, Conservation Director for the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, told the Board that the Sierra Foothill Conservancy has been a previous recipient of SNC land conservation grant funds.

Miller provided feedback and suggestions related to the Land Conservation Grant Guidelines. Executive Officer Avery indicated that staff would be reaching out to the Sierra Foothills Conservancy to obtain a better understanding of these recommended changes.

Chair O'Brien requested that at the June 2022 Board meeting, SNC provide the Board an update on the Guideline amendment requests from the Sierra Foothill Conservancy and whether these recommended updates will result in changes to the Guidelines.

Action

- a) Boardmember Aaron Albaugh moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to:

Approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program Guidelines, *as amended consistent with the Board discussion*, and authorize staff to implement the program.

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

- b) Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Phillip Peters seconded, a motion to:

Approve the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program Guidelines, *as amended consistent with the Board discussion*, and authorize staff to implement the program.

After a roll call vote the results were: Aye – 10, Nay – 2, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

- c) Boardmember Bob Johnston moved, and Boardmember Lori Parlin seconded, a motion to:

Approve allocating the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22 General Fund appropriation as 30 percent for SNC Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Directed Grant Program, 65 percent for SNC Strategic Land Conservation Directed Grant Program, and five (5) percent for the Executive Officer to apply to either program based on

need, and to carry these percentages forward to apply to the multi-year funding that may be appropriated for these purposes in the Budget Act of 2022, and the Budget Act of 2023.

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

9. Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Directed Grants Program Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided a PPT with a brief program background followed by a review of the project summary and staff recommendation. Staff recommended three Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Directed Grants Program Grant Awards for a total of \$1,000,000.

a. #1281-RC

The Local Capacity Building for Planning Fire Resiliency Projects, submitted by Chico State Enterprises in the amount of \$245,321 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmember Jessica Morse asked SNC staff to investigate the use of California Vegetation Treatment Plan (CalVTP) in place of the CEQA documentation. Morse requested SNC staff to inquire with Ascent Environmental to verify that CalVTP applies to the lands in Grant #1281.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Susana Reyes moved, and Boardmember Heather Bernikoff seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Local Capacity Building for Planning Fire Resiliency Projects (#1281-RC), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$245,321 to Chico State Enterprises, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

**Boardmember John Brissenden was not present for this vote.*

b. #1286-RC

The Feather Falls Post-Fire Project, submitted by the Mooretown Rancheria in the amount of \$354,679 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

Matthew Hatcher, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for Mooretown Rancheria, addressed the Board to provide support for this proposed project.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Jessica Morse seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Feather Falls Post-Fire Project (#1286-RC), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$354,679 to the Mooretown Rancheria of the Maidu Indians of California, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

c. #1288-RC

The Blue Mountain Biomass Project, submitted by the Sierra Business Council in the amount of \$400,000 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

Steve Frisch, Sierra Business Council, addressed Boardmember questions and provided clarification about this proposed project. Frisch also addressed the Board to mention the leverage of funds and the many benefits that this grant will provide.

Gregory Stangl, Blue Mountain Electric Company, addressed the Board to let them know that SNC support has been absolutely vital to the success. Stangl continued to state the importance of this project and other biomass projects that would not have been possible without the early SNC capital.

Action

Boardmember Brian Oneto moved, and Boardmember Lori Parlin seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination for the Blue Mountain Biomass Project (#1288-RC), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$400,000 to the Sierra Business Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

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

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided a PPT with a brief program background followed by a review of the project summary and staff recommendation. Staff recommended two Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Directed Grants Program Grant Awards for a total of \$619,850.

a. #1283-RT

The Eastern Sierra Towns to Trails Plan, submitted by the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments in the amount of \$370,443 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Boardmember Christopher Heppe spoke in support of this project.

Public Comment

Elaine Kabala, Executive Director of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments, addressed the Board to answer some clarifying questions around the proposed grant.

Action

Boardmember Ron Hames moved, and Boardmember Phillip Peters seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Eastern Sierra Towns to Trails Plan (#1283-RT), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$370,443 to the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

Boardmember Phillip Peters left the meeting at 12:58 p.m.

Boardmember Christopher Heppe left the meeting at 1:01 p.m.

b. #1287-RT

The Beckwourth Peak Recreation Project, submitted by the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship in the amount of \$249,407 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided background and updated information on the proposed project. Avery told the Board of consultation discussions with the Maidu Summit Consortium about their concerns. Avery provided context to the letter of commitment added to the Board materials and posted online from the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship and told the Board that they have a verbal commitment from the Maidu Summit Consortium to spend the \$10,000 in additional funds to enhance tribal engagement. Avery commended the Maidu Summit Consortium for communicating their concerns and SNC staff for addressing those concerns and finding a possible solution.

Public Comment

Greg Williams, Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship, addressed the Board to express his enthusiasm and said that he looks forward to working with the Maidu Summit Consortium. Williams briefly shared some benefits this project will have.

Action

Boardmember Aaron Albaugh moved, and Boardmember Ron Hames seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Beckwourth Peak Recreation Project (#1287-RT), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$259,407 to Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

11. Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grants Program Grant Award Recommendations (ACTION)

Field Operations Manager Luke Hunt provided a PPT with a brief program background followed by a review of the project summary and staff recommendation. Staff recommended two Forest and Watershed Health Directed Grants Program Grant Awards for a total of \$480,645.

a. #1284

The Pine Ridge-Summit Fuelbreak Maintenance, submitted by the Calaveras County Resource Conservation District in the amount of \$405,605 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Bob Johnston moved, and Boardmember Brian Oneto seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Pine Ridge-Summit Fuelbreak Maintenance project (#1284), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$405,605 to the Calaveras 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, Abstain – 0. The motion passed.

b. #1285

The Sarah Priest Fuel Reduction Planning Project, submitted by the American Indian Council of Mariposa County in the amount of \$75,040 with a CEQA Notice of Exemption.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Action

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff moved, and Boardmember Susana Reyes seconded, a motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the Sarah Priest Fuel Reduction Planning Project (#1285), authorize a grant award in the amount of \$75,040 to the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

12. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Heather Bernikoff thanked the SNC for the letters of support provided to Mariposa County over the past quarter.

13. Public Comments

No public comment.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Additional Board Materials

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