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Secretary Wade Crowfoot
California Natural Resources Agency
715 P Street, 20th Floor
Sacramento, CA, 95814

December 17, 2024

Subject: SNC's 2024 Annual Report to the Legislature

Dear Secretary Crowfoot:

I am pleased to send you the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's (SNC) fiscal year (FY) 2023-24 Annual Report outlining SNC's expenditures, land management costs, and administrative costs. This report meets the requirement pursuant to Public Resources Code, Section 33350.

Celebrating 20 Years of Impact in the Sierra-Cascade

Since its inception in 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has worked to improve the environmental, economic, and social-well-being of the 24-county Sierra-Cascade Region and its communities. 2024 marked SNC's 20th anniversary and offered an opportunity to reflect on the incredible progress that the SNC has made over the past two decades. We released a comprehensive [Impact Report](#) online and are enclosing the attached Impact Brief. Together, the report and brief, provide a comprehensive look at the great work that SNC has supported throughout the Sierra-Cascade Region since its founding in 2004.

In addition to celebrating 20 years of serving the Sierra Nevada-Cascade Region, the SNC is also proud to highlight the following accomplishments.

\$35.150 million awarded to 22 Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Projects

The FY 2023-24 Budget Act appropriated \$35.150 from the General Fund Wildfire and Forest Resilience package to SNC for local assistance. In FY 2023-24 the SNC administered a cycle of its Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Grant Program, making the full amount available to partners across the Sierra-Cascade Region. The cycle received over \$72 million in requests. The full \$35.150 million was awarded to 22 projects. To date, SNC has awarded over \$252 million to projects throughout the Region and partnered with other government entities to distribute over \$35 million more.

Capacity Investments Leveraged \$217 million for Wildfire Resilience

The SNC has been administering three Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP) block grants to increase the ability of our regional partners to plan and implement wildfire risk reduction projects. Under that program to date, SNC has invested \$9.6 million which has been utilized by regional partners to secure an additional \$217 million for wildfire resilience projects. We're also investing in and supporting tribes in our region through a new tribal capacity building pilot program, launched in early 2024, that is designed to help increase tribes' ability to access and manage state and other funding for wildfire risk reduction projects.

FY 2023-24 Expenditures

The SNC receives its base funding from the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). In 2023-24, SNC was appropriated \$5.634 million and had final budgetary expenditures of \$5.627 million.

The department received one-time General Fund appropriations in enactment years (ENY) 2020 through 2023. Up to five percent of these appropriations are available for support, with a final encumbrance, expenditure, or liquidation date of June 30, 2028. The SNC's FY 2023-24 General Fund *local assistance* budget was \$57.703 million (this includes all ENYs); SNC finished the fiscal year with \$47.970 million in budgetary expenditures. The FY 2023-24 *support* budget was \$5.755 million; SNC had budgetary expenditures of \$554,000, with plans in place to spend the full appropriation by the final expenditure and liquidation date in 2028.

The SNC enters into agreements with other entities, including state departments and the federal government, to administer local assistance funding. The SNC is then reimbursed for those expenditures, along with support dollars, which are kept in the department. This funding is run through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Fund (SNC Fund) (all non-federal reimbursement), the Federal Trust Fund (FTF) (federal reimbursements only), and ELPF. The FY 2023-24 reimbursement authority for the SNC Fund was \$6.627 million; reimbursements totaled \$5.718 million at the end of the FY. Reimbursement authority for the FTF was \$2.649 million, with reimbursements totaling \$1.817 million. Although SNC has a reimbursement authority of \$1,000 in ELPF, this was not used in FY 2023-24.

FY 2023-24 Land Management Costs

The SNC had no land management costs in FY 2023-24.

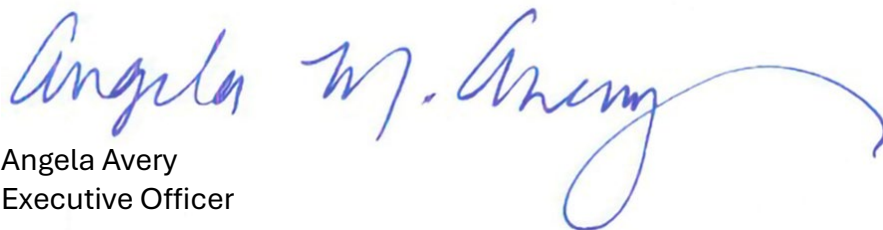
Looking Ahead

Over the next few years, SNC's top priority is to sustain the momentum that we have collectively built through strategic investments in projects and organizations that are increasing the resilience of California's Sierra-Cascade.

Partners across our service area have made incredible strides in their capacity to develop, plan, and implement wildfire and community resilience projects that benefit Sierra-Cascade landscapes and the people who live, visit, and depend on them. The SNC is fully committed to supporting those efforts, but our challenge will be to achieve this in a more difficult budget environment which may reduce local assistance funding available through SNC's grant programs in the immediate future. Regardless, SNC will continue its efforts to build regional capacity to get work done and provide robust technical assistance, policy, and communications support to partners working on the ground.

If you would like additional information about SNC projects or programs, or to discuss matters identified in the report, please feel free to contact me at (530) 823-4670 or angela.avery@sierranevada.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Angela Avery
Executive Officer



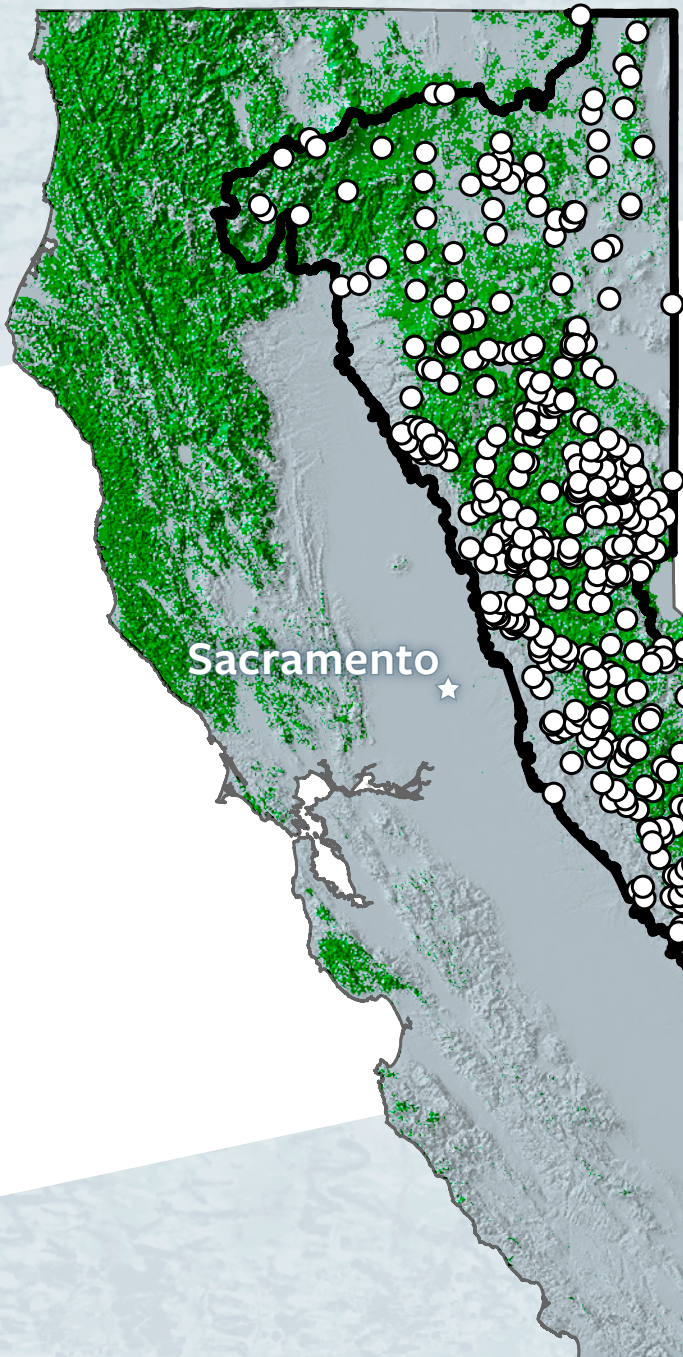
Enclosures: SNC 20-Year Impact Brief

cc:

Sue Parker, Chief Clerk of the Assembly
Amy Leach, Minute Clerk of the Assembly
Erika Contreras, Secretary of the Senate
Office of Legislative Counsel



20 YEARS OF IMPACT



Since 2004, the SNC has invested in
610 PROJECTS
throughout the Sierra-Cascade region,
promoting wildfire & climate resilience,
conserving natural & working lands,
and improving outdoor access.

Last updated October 2024.

View this impact brief online: sierranevada.ca.gov/impact-brief

IMPACTS ON THE GROUND

WILDFIRE & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

165,000 acres treated

EXAMPLE ▶ The SNC funded work, including 3,500 acres of prescribed fire, in the Caples Creek watershed to restore the headwaters of the El Dorado Irrigation District's water system. In 2021, the Caldor Fire burned up to the project area, then slowed and changed course, giving firefighters time and space for critical community protection efforts.



855,000 acres under planning

EXAMPLE ▶ Two SNC grants totaling \$750,000 helped create the North Yuba Forest Partnership and facilitate a 275,000-acre wildfire-resilience planning effort. In 2022, the North Yuba watershed was identified as a U.S. Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy Priority Landscape and received \$160 million in federal funding for implementation.



Large-scale restoration projects require lots of planning, but implementation funding can be unpredictable and have short expenditure windows. Small, early investments bringing collaboratives together to complete project plans and permitting ensure landscapes are ready when implementation funds become available from SNC or other funders.

5:1 PLANNED VS. TREATED ACRES

24 projects protected communities & landscapes from megafires

EXAMPLE ▶ The 2018 Camp Fire took 85 lives and left behind a mostly scorched landscape of dead trees and burned homes. Amidst the destruction remained pockets of green trees, unburned neighborhoods, and Pine Ridge School. These pockets of protection were created by firefighters working in forests thinned before the Camp Fire by the Butte County Fire Safe Council using less than \$1 million of SNC funding.



Wildfire & Climate Resilience Work

254 fuels reduction projects

29 biomass utilization projects

121 community protection projects

17 water infrastructure projects

88 meadow or stream restoration projects

16 reforestation projects

31 fuel breaks

LAND CONSERVATION & STEWARDSHIP

EXAMPLE ▶ The SNC contributed \$735,000 towards a conservation easement on the 602-acre Cinnamon Ranch in the Owens Valley, held by the Eastern Sierra Land Trust. Selling certain development rights allowed the family to hire additional ranch hands, modernize their farming and grazing practices to conserve and protect water resources, and open an additional business creating 7 jobs. Today, a new family business is helping others to adopt modern, waterwise, agricultural practices.



84,000 acres conserved

70% working lands

30% non-working lands



EXAMPLE ▶ The SNC made a small, time-sensitive grant to American Rivers for an environmental assessment and appraisal of the 400-acre Ackerson Meadow on the edge of Yosemite National Park. This opened a path for joint public/private fundraising efforts that led to the purchase and transfer of the land, expanding Yosemite National Park in 2016. American Rivers is now restoring this meadow and biodiversity hotspot.

1,400 acres returned to tribes

EXAMPLE ▶ The Tubatulabal Tribe calls an unusually green valley where the Southern Sierra meets the Mojave, Kolo Kam ap (duck place). This is the first culturally significant land returned to the tribe, thanks to the work of Western Rivers Conservancy and funding from the SNC and Wildlife Conservation Board. The property, also known as Fay Creek Ranch, contains freshwater springs, a hot spring, and Fay Creek, along with grinding stones and trails to the Kern Plateau that the Tubatulabal have been using since time immemorial.



OUTDOOR ACCESS

120 miles of trail constructed



740 miles of trail planned

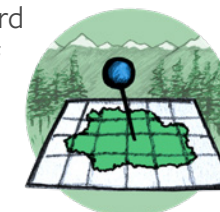
EXAMPLE ▶ The SNC has granted \$2.1 million to the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship's Connected Communities Project, including the creation of its 581-mile Trails Master Plan. The plan aims to link 15 mountain towns in the Lost Sierra, supporting local livelihoods by improving trail access and connectivity. Many miles of trail are already under construction.



15 sites improved for public use

18 properties opened to recreation

EXAMPLE ▶ The SNC contributed \$1 million toward the American River Conservancy's acquisition of the Gold Hill Ranch and Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Colony. The 272-acre purchase preserved the first Japanese settlement in North America (est. 1869) for educational and recreational uses, and prime agricultural land that remains a working organic farm.



EXAMPLE ▶ The SNC contributed \$1 million towards the purchase of 462-acre Grizzly Creek Ranch in Plumas County to secure a permanent home for the outdoor education programs run by Sierra Nevada Journeys. 55 percent of the more than 200,000 kids who have attended the ranch have been from families with financial barriers and 70 percent are students of color.

INVESTING IN OUR PARTNERS



The SNC invests in its partners like its mission depends on it. That's because it does! Unlocking the local knowledge and expertise of Sierra-Cascade organizations is essential to achieving California's natural resource conservation goals.



Technical Assistance

369 funding consultations

65 grantwriting workshops hosted

35+ collaboratives we participate in

Grants by Partner Type

202 conservation nonprofits

65 fire safe councils

20 water agencies

113 land trusts

53 state & federal land managers

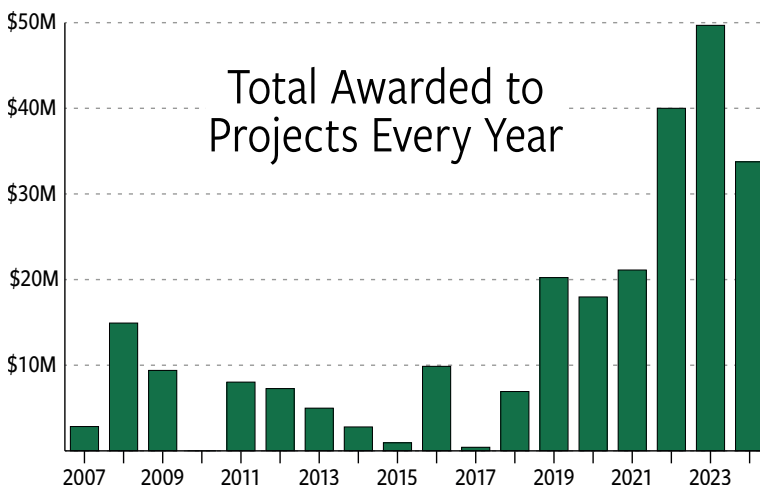
12 colleges & universities

81 resource conservation districts

52 city & county governments

12 tribes & tribal nonprofits

INCREASING INVESTMENT TO THE SIERRA-CASCADE



SNC has used funding efficiently through the years to deliver increasing investments in state priorities in the Sierra-Cascade region. SNC has awarded **\$252 million** to date.

Watershed Improvement Program

SNC's primary initiative, the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP), has been identified as a model program for addressing restoration at the landscape scale in state plans and strategies. The WIP's approach to supporting partners through every stage in the life of a project, from convening partnerships to identifying landscape needs through project implementation, inspired the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). SNC is an RFFCP Regional Block Grantee and has distributed **\$9 million** back into the Sierra-Cascade region to build the capacity of local partners to plan and design projects. To date, these investments have leveraged an additional **\$217 million** in state, federal, and private funding.