



Board Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2024 – North Central Subregion – Auburn, CA

Board Meeting

Placer County Health & Human Services, Cordova Conference Room
11434 B Avenue
Auburn, CA 95603

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

Present:

- John Brissenden
- Elizabeth Cavasso
- Jack Garamendi
- Cindy Gustafson
- Barnie Gyant
- Robert Johnston
- Lisa Lien-Mager
- Michele Perrault
- Victoria Rome
- Dennis Townsend
- Ed Valenzuela
- Nathan Voegeli

Absent:

- Jeff Griffiths

Non-Voting Liaison Advisors Present:

- Elizabeth Berger
- Christopher Heppe
- Clayton Jordan

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

By statute, the Governing Board is to elect a Chair of the Board and a Vice-Chair annually. The Board Chair position was vacated in March 2024; due to this vacancy, the newly elected Board Chair's term would be effective immediately following this item.

Boardmember John Brissenden nominated Nathan Voegeli to serve as Board Chair immediately and during calendar year 2025.

Action

Boardmember Brissenden moved and Boardmember Ed Valenzuela seconded the motion to approve the election of Nathan Voegeli as Board Chair for the remainder of the 2024 calendar year and the entire 2025 calendar year.

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

Boardmember Valenzuela nominated Dennis Townsend to serve as Vice-Chair during calendar year 2025.

Action

Boardmember Jack Garamendi moved and Boardmember Valenzuela seconded the motion to approve the election of Dennis Townsend as Vice-Chair for the 2025 calendar year.

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

4. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Board Chair Voegeli administered the Oath of Office for incoming Boardmember Clayton Jordan.

Boardmembers Johnston and Rome arrived during this item.

5. Approval of September 5, 2024 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)

Action

Boardmember Garamendi moved and Boardmember Lisa Lien-Mager seconded the motion to approve the September 5, 2024, Meeting Minutes.

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

6. Board Chair's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Board Chair Voegeli thanked the prior day's tour presenters.

7. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)

a. Executive Officer Update

Executive Officer Angela Avery provided the Board with updates, including thanking departing Boardmembers and welcoming the newly elected Chair and Vice-Chair; the passage of the Climate Bond (Proposition 4) by voters in November 2024, SNC's allocations in the bond, and consistency and collaboration among California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) departments in disbursing the funds; a longer-term funding concept among conservancies and the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), which aligns with the state's Nature-Based Solutions climate targets; and federal funding, needs, and changes at the federal level that could affect SNC.

Boardmember Elizabeth Berger announced her upcoming departure from the U.S. Forest Service and subsequent exit from SNC's Board after this meeting. Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on the importance of the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force's Interagency Treatment Dashboard and the current goal of understanding the Climate Bond and how to make it most effective.

b. Administrative Update

Acting Chief Deputy Executive Officer Amy Lussier spoke to the Board on SNC's response to the current state of the budget and potential cuts, the upcoming Governor's Budget, and the timing of the Climate Bond (Proposition 4) funds.

Business Services Manager Amanda Grant provided the Board with an update on the Business Services unit, Auburn office improvements, purchasing figures related to Small Businesses and Disabled Veteran Enterprise Businesses, and SNC's vehicle fleet.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on savings from the Mariposa office space reduction and the difficulty of having a zero-emission fleet in the Region.

c. Policy & Outreach Update

Policy & Outreach Division Chief Brittany Covich spoke to the Board on legislative and state policy updates and newly elected assemblymembers and senators; the California Jobs First initiative; SNC's recent communications projects; and Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program capacity-building work with tribal partners.

Policy Analyst Chelsea Duncan provided information on Attachment A: SNC Policy Platform for 2025, detailing the updates for 2025.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on woody biomass infrastructure, transportation subsidies, and emissions; and a request for maps showing where biomass facilities are located.

d. Field Operations & Grants Update

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Andy Fristensky provided the Board with an update on SNC grant activity in 2024; highlighted several SNC projects; and discussed fires, fire behavior, and SNC response to fire needs.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on effective projects for fire prevention, positive relationships among stakeholders, the need for more communication to the public on fire-prevention projects, and the importance of leveraging funding and relationships. Additional conversation centered around the communication requirements of SNC's grantees.

8. 2025 Board Meeting Schedule (ACTION)

Executive Officer Avery presented the proposed 2025 Board meeting schedule:

- March 5 & 6, South Central Subregion – Calaveras County
- June 4 & 5, Northeast Subregion – Modoc County
- September 3 & 4, Southwest Subregion – Fresno County
- December 11 & 12, Sacramento

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on a request to consider if SNC should continue to meet in Sacramento and if staff can explore having one meeting per year on tribal grounds.

Action

Boardmember Dennis Townsend moved and Boardmember Barnie Gyant seconded the motion to approve staff's recommendation to approve the 2025 Board meeting schedule, authorize staff to utilize either the September or December meeting to propose the following year's dates and locations without prior commitment to which meeting is held in Sacramento, give the Executive Officer the authority to reverse the order of the tour and meeting, if necessary, and direct staff to take the necessary actions for successful implementation.

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

9. Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI) Update (INFORMATIONAL)

Coordinator of the TCSI Maiya Greenwood and Katie Pofahl of The Nature Conservancy presented an update on recent activities of the TCSI, including current strategies and barriers to increasing wood utilization in its region.

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on biomass facilities, including quantity and locations; general biomass issues and barriers; funding availability; and progress that has and has not been made around these issues.

Public Comment

Regine Miller of Headwaters Environmental commented on mechanisms to aggregate biomass from multiple jurisdictions to support long-term contracts for existing and emerging facilities. Miller noted the studies on the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) website.

Boardmember Brissenden left during this item.

10. Grant 1507 'Inimim Forest Restoration Project - Phase 3 Amendment (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Fristensky provided the Board with information on the proposed amendment to the 'Inimim Forest Restoration Project - Phase 3 (#1507) with the Yuba Watershed Institute, with a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notice of Exemption.

Proposed amendments to the project are biomass harvesting largely replacing mastication and hand thinning, allowable removal of trees up to 30" diameter at breast height (DBH), and the responsibility of biomass disposal transferred to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Discussion among Boardmembers and staff focused on BLM's intentions to work with partners for the removal of the biomass.

Action

Boardmember Garamendi moved and Boardmember Bob Johnston seconded the motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Exemption for the 'Inimim Forest Restoration Project (#1507) amendment, approve the revised project scope per the Exhibit A, and authorize staff to amend the grant agreement with the Yuba Watershed Institute.

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

11. Wildfire Recovery and Forest Resilience Directed Grant Program Award Recommendation (ACTION)

Field Operations & Grants Division Chief Fristensky provided the Board with background on the grant program funding and information to make determinations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and award a grant to the following project:

a. #1694

Alpenglow Timber Sawmill Project in Nevada County in the amount of \$1,544,950 to the Sierra Business Council with a CEQA Notice of Determination as a Responsible Agency.

(1) Action

CEQA Determination: Boardmember Cindy Gustafson moved and Boardmember Valenzuela seconded the motion to certify that the Board independently reviewed and considered the information in the Alpenglow Timber Use Permit Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (2024) and accompanying Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

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

(2) Action

Project Approval and Grant Award: Boardmember Gustafson moved and Boardmember Townsend seconded the motion to authorize the Executive Officer to file a Notice of Determination as a responsible agency for the Alpenglow Timber Sawmill Project (#1694), approve a grant award in the amount of \$1,544,950 to the Sierra Business Council, and authorize staff to enter into agreements necessary for project implementation.

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

Public Comment

Kristin York, vice president of the Sierra Business Council, noted the importance of private sector commitment to the project, emphasized the community and economic benefits, and noted the project could be a model for other communities.

David Mercer of Alpenglow Timber expressed that timber-related grants make a difference and are needed with the abundance of logs.

12. Boardmember Comments

Departing Boardmembers expressed their appreciation to the SNC and reflected on their time on the Board.

13. Public Comments

Alpine County Supervisor Ron Hames spoke on a ranchland transfer near Markleeville, which would cause loss of property tax, and additional natural resources-related challenges in the county.

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

Additional Board Materials

- Executive Officer Authorized Grant Agreement Amendments and Grant Awards
- Key Meetings and Presentations
- Letters of Support
- Sierra Spotlight