

2014-15

Action Plan Accomplishments



SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

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The following represents the major initiatives and activities that were undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) between July 2014 and December 2015, consistent with the SNC's 2011-15 Strategic Plan (Plan). The 2014-15 Action Plan was originally approved by the SNC Governing Board in June 2014 and revisions to it were approved by the Board in December 2014. The actions listed here include the December 2014 revisions. For the most part, the SNC was able to undertake the actions and activities identified in the Action Plan, but in a couple of instances, decisions by partners rendered fulfillment of the SNC's proposed actions infeasible.

Grant Program

Action Planned: Award all of the funds available under the 2013-14 grant round, which was focused on healthy forest, biomass utilization, and abandoned mine land projects.

What was accomplished:

- Awarded nearly \$1.5 million to nine projects, representing all available funds, to local projects Region-wide. Of the nine, two were Category Two planning projects and the remaining seven were Category One implementation projects that focused on healthy forest, biomass utilization, and abandoned mine land projects.

Action Planned: Implement the Rim Fire restoration grant focus area, funding \$1 million of high quality projects in the affected Region.

What was accomplished:

- Collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and partners to develop a specific restoration strategy and timeline for available funding, and awarded two Category 2 assessment/planning grants of approximately \$150,000 to support the Rim Fire restoration effort. These grants provide needed pre-project due diligence for identified stream, meadow, and forest restoration projects. The process is on track to award the remainder of the \$1 million for project implementation in 2016.

Action Planned: Close out 34 current grant projects (allocating returned funds to the 2013-14 grant round), completing all required reporting, including SNC's Success Tracker and Performance Measures Database as well as state documentation.

What was accomplished:

- Due to the extended reporting timeframe and strong grantee performance, SNC closed 40 grant projects – six more than the 34 projected. SNC continues to utilize, refine, and upgrade internal reporting tools in order to track project and grant program metrics.

Action Planned: Provide timely and accurate response to any bond reporting and audit requests received. Update the Agency Bond Consolidated Reporting System web site and the California Strategic Growth Plan Bond Accountability web site as required in Executive Order S-02-07.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC grant program and administrative staff maintain a strong commitment to accurate and timely external reporting, including to the Agency Bond Consolidated Reporting System that now directly populates the California Strategic Growth Plan Accountability web site. Additionally, SNC and its grantees responded to more than 10 project audit requests from the Department of Finance (DOF) and held a DOF-sponsored training program for SNC staff.

Action Planned: Develop guidelines, including the holding of public workshops and submission to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), for the 2015-16 Proposition 1 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- New grant guidelines for the SNC Proposition 1 grant program were developed by staff with input from the general public and grant program stakeholders. Public workshops were held on March 12, 18, and 19, in Redding, Auburn, and Visalia, respectively. The guidelines were formally adopted by the SNC Board at its June 2015 meeting, and staff released the Grant Application Packet to the public in July 2015, in advance of the first application deadline in September 2015.

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

Specific actions to be accomplished under SNFCI were organized into three tiers in terms of priority levels, 1 indicating highest priority and 3 indicating lowest priority.

Action Planned: Develop a Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Action Plan to guide the SNC's efforts in addressing the dire state of many forests in the Sierra Nevada. The plan will include actions to address Regional issues and to facilitate collaborative processes for the identification of needs and priorities at the local level.

What was accomplished:

- In December 2014, the SNC Board approved the [SNFCI Action Plan](#). This plan was created in collaboration with the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council (CC) and will serve as a roadmap for restoring forest health in the Sierra Nevada Region.

Action Planned: Launch an effort to develop a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) in collaboration with other state, federal, and local government entities; nonprofit and community organizations; and tribes. The purpose of the plan will be to address key policy issues and coordinate investment in the Sierra Nevada to reduce risks to the benefits the Region provides.

What was accomplished:

- In March 2015, the SNC and the USFS co-hosted a summit to launch the Sierra Nevada WIP.
- In a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by CNRA Secretary John Laird and USFS Regional Forester Randy Moore in August 2015, the SNC was identified as the lead state agency responsible for organizing and implementing the WIP as well as the federal California Headwaters Partnership, which recognizes the Sierra-

Cascade Region as a flagship landscape under President Obama's Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative.

- In October 2015, SNC and USFS hosted a webinar to update existing and potential partners on the current status of the WIP, including an overview of the WIP, a high-level review of the WIP Regional Strategy, and opportunities through which interested parties can endorse and engage with the WIP. A total of 132 individuals, from a diverse range of interests and geographic locations inside and outside of the Sierra Nevada Region, participated in this webinar.
- The SNC and some of its partners commenced work to develop the WIP Regional Strategy. The strategy will include key information, trends, plans, and data for major categories influencing watershed health, as well as the process and timeline through which the WIP will be implemented.

Action Planned: Provide Proposition 84 grant funding for projects that meet SNC criteria for healthy forests funding under the 2013-14 grant round and Rim Fire restoration grant focus. (Tier 1)

What was accomplished:

- Five grants were awarded totaling approximately \$825,000 to support projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve forest health.
- Collaborated with the USFS and other partners to develop a specific restoration strategy and timeline for available funding, and awarded two Category 2 assessment/planning grants, as described in the Rim Fire restoration grant section above.

Action Planned: Continue to work with the SNFCI CC and the USFS in specific focus areas most likely to reduce barriers to increase pace and scale of ecological restoration in Sierra forests. (Tier 1)

What was accomplished:

- An MOU was developed and signed by state and federal land managers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and prescribed fire councils to capture a commitment to increase the use of fire for ecological and other benefits, and provide guidance developed by governmental and other stakeholders to address fire management across jurisdictions. The MOU will greatly increase collective ability to increase the use of prescribed fire on the landscape as a restoration tool.
- The USFS Region 5 has been working closely with the SNFCI CC to develop a toolbox to help National Forests and local collaborative groups to more effectively retain economic benefits from restoration work in local communities.
- The USFS Region 5 is working closely with the SNFCI CC to ensure that language is being included in forest plan revisions to enable better access and utilization of modern technology to increase access to steep slope areas for forest thinning, thereby decreasing the risk of uncharacteristically large wildfires and increasing the ability to use prescribed and managed fire as a restoration tool on the landscape.

Action Planned: Continue to develop and support projects consistent with SNFCI objectives, with clear deliverables and quantifiable measures for success and a positive influence on increasing pace and scale of restoration. (Tier 2)

What was accomplished:

- A number of projects funded by SNC's Proposition 84 grant program have been completed. Fuel reduction and restoration projects reduced the risk of large, catastrophic wildfires while promoting forest health, and meadow restoration projects improved plant and wildlife habitat. Local organizations and agencies benefitted from the work enabled by SNC grant funds, and Sierra watershed and forest health improved.
- Through fund identification and grant review, helped the Kern River Valley Heritage Foundation secure funding for site improvement and wetlands expansion for the Bob Powers Wetland Preserve near Lake Isabella.
- Provided staffing and funding support for the development of a Southern Sierra Fisher Conservation Strategy, with the goal of producing a final, geographically specific, "all lands" conservation strategy for the Pacific fisher. It is anticipated that the conservation strategy will be finalized in early 2016.

Action Planned: Support forest and biomass collaboration efforts seeking long-term sustainability by assisting them in the search for capacity-building funding through SNC partners and other opportunities. (Tier 2)

What was accomplished:

- Provided funding development assistance to collaborative efforts through funding consultations and grant research memos.
- Assisted the Sierra Institute in obtaining two Rural Community Development Grants to provide resources for capacity-building in communities that are developing collaborative biomass projects. The grants total more than \$400,000.
- Worked successfully with the forest health collaboratives and biomass working groups listed below to obtain over \$5 million in funding for building both internal capacity and project development capacity. Assistance from staff was provided by introducing relevant funding sources to individual groups, or through direct technical assistance with application or project development:
 - Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions
 - Alpine Biomass to Bioenergy Group
 - Mariposa Biomass Group
 - Groveland Biomass Group
 - Watershed Connections
 - North Fork Community Power
 - Camptonville Community Partnership
 - State Wood Energy Team
 - Northern Sierra Biomass Taskforce
 - Lost Sierra Community Collaborative

Action Planned: Participate in various efforts to promote research, policy changes, and investment in support of SNFCI objectives. (Tier 2)

What was accomplished:

- Began work with the USFS, CAL FIRE, and other partners on a science synthesis document that will aggregate the best available science on forest carbon, and will make policy and funding recommendations that are supported by the top Regional scientists in this field.
- Worked with Secretary Laird and CNRA staff to implement actions identified in Governor Brown's Rim Fire Emergency Proclamation and successfully confirmed California Environmental Quality Act exemptions for more than \$29 million of Rim Fire restoration projects.
- Initiated support for a Sierra Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) cooperative discussion group to allow agencies and organizations to better coordinate data needs, resources, and funding opportunities. LIDAR is a remote sensing tool that can provide researchers with invaluable information regarding forest health, water supply, topographic information, and infrastructure location, all of which directly support SNFCI efforts.

Action Planned: Monitor various in-progress projects and efforts that may intersect with SNFCI, either through policy changes that may impact the initiative, or emerging needs which might be strong candidates for SNC support or technical assistance, as resources allow. (Tier 3)

What was accomplished:

- Participated throughout the Region in a number of collaboratives working to improve forest and watershed health, including but not limited to:
 - Dinkey Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program
 - Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative
 - Watershed Connections Working Group
 - Southern Sierra Regional Water Management Group
 - Amador Calaveras Consensus Group
 - Yosemite Stanislaus Solutions
 - Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative
 - Alpine Biomass to Bioenergy Group
 - Mariposa Biomass Group
 - Burney/Hat Creek Community Forest and Watershed Group
 - Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership
 - Mariposa County Tree Mortality Disaster Committee
 - Diamond Mountain Initiative Working Group

Biomass Utilization

Action Planned: Provide Proposition 84 grant funding for projects that meet SNC criteria for biomass utilization funding under the 2013-14 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- Awarded a grant for the implementation of the Mono County Thermal Biomass Project. This project will provide a model of using biomass boiler systems for heating public facilities.

- Also awarded an implementation grant for the Plumas County Energy Wood Processing Facility, which will convert forest biomass into conditioned wood chip fuel for boilers and enable the rapid development and implementation of a larger woody renewables boiler network.

Action Planned: Continue to strategically provide technical assistance and funding support, as well as identify additional funding sources, for projects in various stages of development within the Region. Under the Bioenergy Action Plan, the SNC will provide a limited level of assistance to projects outside the Region.

What was accomplished:

- Collaborative work by SNC staff and other agencies resulted in a \$4.9 million award for the implementation of a community-scale biomass project in North Fork, Madera County.
- Assisted in obtaining funding for four additional projects to complete feasibility studies for bioenergy facilities, and for three projects to complete System Impact Studies in preparation for utility interconnection.
- Assisted the Northern California Community Loan Fund with the development of a technical assistance program for financing biomass and bioenergy projects. The program will target those projects which will most significantly increase capacity for biomass utilization, thereby potentially increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration.
- Helped design and fund a capacity-building program to assist 10 communities working to develop bioenergy projects.

Action Planned: Continue to work with other agencies (such as the USFS, CAL FIRE, the California Public Utilities Commission, and the California Energy Commission) to help craft policies and programs to assist forest biomass infrastructure development and retention.

What was accomplished:

- Continued to work with other members of the Biomass Working Group to finalize the California Public Utilities Commission rule-making regarding the Senate Bill 1122 forest biomass auction process (now known as BioMat), ensuring adequate feed-in tariff pricing for community-scale forest bioenergy facilities. To date, no such facilities are operational.

Action Planned: Continue to provide outreach to help educate policy-makers and the public on the issues associated with woody biomass utilization, to help diverse interests resolve issues and concerns.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC staff made presentations at conferences, workshops, and during field tours to help diverse interests better understand the importance of local woody biomass utilization in helping to reduce open pile burning and the associated air pollution, as well as the local economic development opportunities of developing value-added biomass products and bioenergy.

Action Planned: Help to compile information and develop tools that assist in identifying the most appropriate locations for biomass utilization facilities.

What was accomplished:

- A geographic information systems (GIS) tool that identifies appropriate sites based on factors such as biomass availability, interconnection opportunities, etc., was finalized, and training was provided to SNC staff and other interested entities.

Abandoned Mine Lands

Action Planned: Continue to identify and develop abandoned mine lands (AML) project proposals eligible for funding in the 2013-14 grant round until the funding allocations are fully spent.

What was accomplished:

- Three grants totaling over \$326,000 were awarded to AML projects developed under the Proposition 84 2013-14 grant round. Two of the projects were for remediation planning efforts in Nevada and Plumas Counties. The third award was for a pilot project developed to combine the two areas of focus for the grant round: fuel reduction work and AML remediation. Biomass from a nearby thinning project will be used to amend soils at an AML site on public land in order to improve vegetative regrowth and reduce sedimentation in nearby waterbodies.

Action Planned: Continue to pursue the goal of a blanket due diligence process for properties that may be acquired using state funds.

What was accomplished:

- The CNRA approved the formation of a multi-department committee to develop a policy to provide guidance to all departments under the CNRA umbrella regarding AML-impacted land identification prior to purchasing or funding land acquisitions or conservation easements. The SNC is a member of the committee, and the policy is anticipated to be in place by June 2016.

Action Planned: Facilitate increased collaboration among state agencies participating in AML remediation in the Sierra and other parts of the state by providing support to the California Abandoned Mine Lands Agency Group (CAMLAG) and helping to identify and fill gaps in research, data, and knowledge that could be addressed in order to facilitate a more collaborative approach.

What was accomplished:

- Entered into a three-way contract with the Department of Conservation and University of California (UC) Davis to complete the first phase of a statewide AML prioritization tool, the California Abandoned Mine Land Prioritization Tool (CAMPT). The SNC provided \$30,000 toward the development of the tool and is providing staff time for completion of tasks identified in the work plan. The CAMPT will be a searchable database that may be used by state agencies to identify high-risk mine sites that need further assessment or remediation. Sites will be found through multiple filters such as location, type of contaminant, proximity to recreational

facilities, and proximity to water source, thereby providing the capability to address specific focus areas and needs.

- Continued to participate in CAMLAG meetings, contributing ideas and information on how to employ a more collaborative approach for funding and remediation work.

Action Planned: Continue to work with partners to educate decision-makers and others about legacy mining impacts, sponsoring or partnering in AML symposia and other events.

What was accomplished:

- Sponsored and participated in an event organized by The Sierra Fund, Reclaiming the Sierra 2015: The New Gold Rush. The event focused on the impacts of legacy mining in the Sierra Nevada, and attracted over 200 participants including policy-makers, local government officials, tribal members, state agency staff, and members of the public.

Action Planned: Continue to explore various funding opportunities for AML cleanup.

What was accomplished:

- Worked with CNRA and department partners to identify opportunities for AML projects in the various Proposition 1 grant programs. The opportunities identified through Proposition 1 as well as other state, federal, and philanthropic funding sources will be compiled into a comprehensive AML Funding Resource Opportunity document for open distribution and posting to the SNC web site in February 2016. The document will be updated approximately every six months.

Regional Agriculture and Ranching

Action Planned: Working closely with the Recreation and Tourism Initiative, support efforts to develop a Sierra Agritourism Network and increase the presence of agritourism on the Sierra Nevada Geotourism (SNGT) MapGuide, web site, and companion materials.

What was accomplished:

- Participated in a workshop with the Lost Sierra Tourism Collaborative (Sierra and Plumas Counties) in October 2014 and identified new agritourism products from that region to add to the SNGT web site.
- Sponsored, helped organize, and participated in the first California Agritourism Summit held in April 2015 in Woodland, CA. 100 participants from around the state attended – including more than 40 from the Sierra Nevada Region.
- Facilitated a discussion between Visit California and the UC Davis Small Farm Center that led to expansion of the agritourism section on the Visit California web site.
- Curated Sierra Nevada farmers market information from the UC Davis Small Farm Center for inclusion on the SNGT web site.

Action Planned: Continue to participate in discussions, workshops, and meetings to understand relevant issues, policies, and actions, and build relationships within the farming and ranching communities.

What was accomplished:

- Engaged and worked with local ranchers, land trusts, and other NGOs to identify eligible projects such as stream restoration, grazing management plans, and agricultural conservation easements that were submitted for SNC Proposition 84 funding. The SNC Board authorized funding for a number of these projects, which are now being implemented.

Action Planned: Support partner efforts to engage and reach out to policy-makers and legislators regarding the benefits of agriculture and ranching, and include these messages in SNC outreach and communication efforts as appropriate.

What was accomplished:

- Participated and helped support site tours of agriculture projects in the North and Central Subregions. The tours included local officials and policy-makers.
- Sponsored and attended the 2015 California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Summit, which was jointly held with the Society for Range Management National Conference in Sacramento. During the joint conferences, SNC staff met with local ranchers, NGO leaders, and elected officials to discuss ranching and agricultural issues in the Sierra Nevada.

Action Planned: Work with partners to support their efforts, including potentially funding and implementing workshops addressing specific needs; utilize grant writer to find funds to support these efforts.

What was accomplished:

- Assisted in drafting a U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant application for biochar demonstration projects in Tehama and Placer Counties.

Action Planned: Support and participate in ongoing conversations regarding grazing on public lands.

What was accomplished:

- Sponsored and participated in the 2015 California Association of Resource Conservation Districts' annual conference.
- Provided oversight of the 2014 grazing assessment project completed for the USFS in the Kern Plateau in the Eastern Subregion. A decision was made by the USFS following the assessment not to pursue the matter further.

Regional Tourism and Recreation

Action Planned: Solicit and develop new content and destinations for display on the SNGT web site, with an emphasis on agritourism and under-represented regions.

What was accomplished:

- Nearly 170 new nominations were added to the SNGT web site, for a total of more than 1,900 nominations at the end of 2015.

- Conducted two SNGT nomination training sessions in the North Subregion, with over 90 participants attending.
- Participated in discussions with National Geographic web developers to provide significant input to the development of the 2.0 version of the geotourism web site platform that is now being implemented.
- Drafted and executed an agreement with Sierra Business Council that re-defined the responsibilities for management of the overall SNGT project, effective January 2016.

Action Planned: Implement the first of a two-year distribution plan for half of the 71,000 printed SNGT MapGuides (third printing).

What was accomplished:

- Executed a contract with Certified Folder for the distribution of 40,000 SNGT MapGuides in high-traffic outdoor retailer locations in Southern and Northern California in spring and summer of 2015, as well as in Certified Folder contracted locations throughout the Sierra Nevada Region.
- Distributed another 14,000 SNGT MapGuides to key distribution locations in the Sierra Nevada, including visitor centers and chamber of commerce offices.

Action Planned: Implement a marketing plan aimed at increasing downloads of mobile phone applications and the amount of web traffic visiting the SNGT site on a monthly basis.

What was accomplished:

- Paid print advertisements were inserted in the 2015 California Visitors Guide and Yosemite Journal, generating over 1,700 fulfillment requests for the SNGT MapGuide.
- The SNGT web site received more than 534,000 visits from July 2014 to December 2015, for an average of more than 44,000 visits per month during that period.
- Facebook reach increased to more than 1,900 followers and Twitter reach increased to more than 250 followers; these figures were up 11 percent and 13 percent, respectively.
- The metrics for the mobile application download indicated strong activity, with more than 500 downloads occurring in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Action Planned: Assist in the development of up to three water trail projects with local organizations, including seeking outside resources to support this effort.

What was accomplished:

- Provided funding and assistance for the development and design of the Lake Almanor Water Trail Map, a multi-partner effort.
- With the intent of identifying funding for the implementation of the Lower Owens River Recreation Use Plan, provided support to Inyo County for a California State Parks Recreation and Trails grant, and facilitated meetings with stakeholders for potential development of the Lower Owens River Management Alliance.

Action Planned: Continue working with state and local partners promoting existing agritourism opportunities, and support efforts to establish new agritourism opportunities by

organizing a series of agritourism training workshops in targeted areas and linking agritourism projects in the Region to create and market a Region-wide network of agritourism products and experiences.

What was accomplished:

- Collaborated with the UC Davis Small Farm Center and the UC Cooperative Extension in Quincy to develop and implement agritourism training curriculum covering three training sessions.

Action Planned: Engage with industry professionals and organizations to increase exposure of the Region and tourism issues in the Region.

What was accomplished:

- Represented the Region at meetings of the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.
- Sponsored and attended the 2015 California Trails and Greenways Conference, where SNGT MapGuides were distributed and discussions with key trail organization leaders occurred.
- Provided support for the formation of the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative (ESRC), which convened stakeholders of the eastern Sierra gateway communities and interested parties in a collaborative effort to help inform the Forest Management Plan Revision (FMPR) efforts of the Inyo National Forest, using a “recreation lens” to develop an ESRC strategy and guiding principles. The ESRC initiative was also shared with the USFS Region 5 planning team and with USFS leadership in the Washington, D.C., office as a possible model for future collaborative efforts around FMPR.
- Facilitated discussions with a variety of regional organizations such as Shasta-Cascade Wonderland Association and Lost Sierra Tourism Collaborative to identify opportunities for enhancing tourism efforts in those respective areas.
- Initiated discussions with Visit California leadership that led to a commitment of financial support for a SNC research project focused on the impact of catastrophic fires on the Region’s tourism-based communities.

Ecosystem Services

Action Planned: Continue to communicate the key findings of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis (MACA), to make the case that new and additional investment in fuel treatments is a cost savings measure and needed for long-term forest health.

What was accomplished:

- The MACA report continues to generate interest and the results have been presented at several conferences and meetings. Additionally, the sediment modeling chapter in the MACA final report has been submitted and provisionally accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, providing scientific merit to the process that was used.

Action Planned: Work with project partners to evaluate new opportunities to implement actions based on the outcomes of the MACA.

What was accomplished:

- The MACA group continues to communicate and work on projects where possible. The sediment modelers from the project worked with the Bureau of Land Management and CAL FIRE to project sedimentation from the Butte Fire under estimated El Niño conditions, helping those two agencies strategically target areas for stabilization ahead of the winter rains. Similarly, the fire modeling process developed for the MACA has been expanded to other watersheds in the Region; that work will be integrated into the WIP as well. To date, the MACA has not resulted in increased restoration activities in the watershed.

Action Planned: Coordinate with key partners, including USFS, The Nature Conservancy, and UC Merced, to identify and implement research and monitoring projects to better understand the relationship between forest management and water yield.

What was accomplished:

- The continuing drought emphasized the critical water supply contributions of the Region to the rest of the state, but the lack of water also hindered ongoing water research on connections between forest management and water yield. As reported at the September 2015 Board meeting, The Nature Conservancy released its report strongly suggesting that not only would water yield improve due to ecological forest treatments, but that in some cases the additional water would provide an economic benefit equal to or greater than the cost of the treatments.
- The SNC had previously provided funding for the UC-led Sierra Nevada Watershed Ecosystem Enhancement Project (SWEEP) which continues to move forward. Dr. Roger Bales at UC Merced has identified two watersheds, the Tuolumne and American Rivers, for additional SWEEP research, and SNC will continue to track his progress.

Action Planned: Evaluate the initial findings and potential of a previously funded project to quantify any potential water yield increase and change to the hydrograph that may result from meadow restoration activities. Work with U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and other partners to better understand the connection of forests, fires, and sediment to existing reservoirs within the state. Evaluate potential problem areas and begin to quantify the extent of the problem, if any.

What was accomplished:

- A project by the USGS collected new reservoir sedimentation data and created a new reservoir sedimentation model for the Sierra Nevada. The results of the model identified reservoirs most affected by fire, the initial results of which were presented at the 2015 Reclaiming the Sierra conference in Sacramento. The report and a proposal for the next stage of the study are presently in review at the USGS. The results of the initial study are expected to be useful for catalyzing public interest and science around reservoir sedimentation and its effects in the Sierra Nevada.

Education and Communications

Action Planned: Elevate the profile of the SNC as an accepted, trusted resource for information regarding the link between upper watersheds, forest health, climate change, clean water, clean air, and sustainable communities through increased involvement and communications on such issues.

What was accomplished:

- SNC staff was invited to participate in and are active members of a number of working groups that recognize the importance and value of the Region in the long-term health and well-being of California. These include:
 - The California Forest Climate Action Team, which was formed under the direction and leadership of Governor Brown in August 2014 to develop a Forest Carbon Plan by the end of 2016. The SNC staff are active members of the Policy and Co-benefits working groups that will determine how to best integrate the new science findings into state planning goals under Assembly Bill 32.
 - The California Forest and Watershed Association, whose members are working together to seek new ways to promote proactive, science-based, and ecologically sound forest management practices that will reduce the risk of destructive megafires by accelerating the pace and scale of forest restoration. The SNC is an ex officio/non-voting member of the alliance.
 - The Tree Mortality Task Force, which was organized in late 2015 after Governor Brown issued an emergency tree mortality declaration. The SNC staff are active members of six of the eight working groups of the task force.
- Also worked with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research and other partners to develop the second phase of a \$117 million proposal for the Rim Fire area through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's National Disaster Resilience Competition. The proposal, submitted to HUD in October 2015, called for SNC to administer and oversee the planning and implementation of a biomass facility and wood products campus, as well as the forest and watershed health projects identified in the application.
- Actively participated in the weekly CNRA Public Information Officer meetings.
- Signed on as a non-voting member of the Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership, through which SNC has gained access to a large network of statewide policy-makers working toward a climate-adapted state in alignment with the Safeguarding California plan and other administration initiatives.

Action Planned: Continue relationship-building activities and conduct regular meetings with local, state, and federal agencies; legislators; and other decision-makers to ensure investment in the Region where more than 60 percent of the state's developed water supply originates.

What was accomplished:

- Conducted regular visits to the Capitol, which proved beneficial in developing new and fostering existing relationships with legislative staff and creating opportunities

to deliver presentations to committees, such as the Legislative Environmental Caucus, on topics of relevance to the SNC Region.

- Conducted more than 75 meetings with state legislators and legislative staff.
- Coordinated a screening of the Fire Next Time video at the State Capitol Theater, and secured sponsorship for the screening from Senator Tom Berryhill and Assembly Member Frank Bigelow. The screening, which coincided with Senator Berryhill's Wildfire Awareness Week Senate Concurrent Resolution, drew 25 viewers, including five Legislators and 10 staff.
- The SNC received unanimous support in both houses for its first two pieces of formally sponsored legislation, Assembly Bill 985 and Assembly Concurrent Resolution 22. The latter of the two received nearly 80 co-authors.
- The SNC was quite pleased to have several legislators and staff in attendance at its 10th anniversary celebration in March 2015. This fantastic event, hosted by long-time partner The Sierra Fund, was enhanced by the presence of policy-makers, and afforded both the SNC and its many partners a prime opportunity to discuss issues of importance to the Region.

Action Planned: Utilize events, newsletters, media stories, press releases, social media postings, the SNC Web site, interactive/story maps, and other related activities to communicate the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the rest of the state.

What was accomplished:

- The State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests Report was produced and shared with statewide legislators, agency partners, media outlets, Regional partners, and the public. This report detailed the currently unhealthy conditions in Sierra forests, and identified a variety of challenges and opportunities related to restoring the Sierra to a more resilient state.
- Fact sheets were developed to provide targeted audiences with key, Sierra-focused information on the 2014 King Fire, as well as the newly launched Sierra Nevada WIP. These one- to two-page documents were shared with statewide legislators, agency partners, Regional partners, and the public during tours, tabling events, and face-to-face meetings.
- Placed an interpretive display in the governor's annex as part of the March 2015 Board meeting events. This display coincided with the WIP Summit and conveyed key messages relative to forest health, fire, and the need for increased action to address the two.
- Worked with the USFS to develop and roll out a WIP social media "You Choose" billboard campaign that highlighted the results of continued inaction in the upper watersheds.

Action Planned: Track and analyze current Sierra Nevada scientific research to inform the development of sound science-based policy that protects and restores the Sierra Nevada Region.

What was accomplished:

- Actively tracked and analyzed a variety of scientific research papers which have led to a better understanding of the complex systems in the Region and how

important those systems are in helping the state meet its goals. The value of this activity has been most evident in greenhouse gas reduction policies, where recent research has shown that megafires can emit in a few weeks as much carbon as California's major cities do in a single year.

Action Planned: Partner with allies to complete Regional tours that demonstrate the value of SNC initiatives and the importance of investment in watershed and forest health projects.

What was accomplished:

- Coordinated five tours with partners including the California Forestry Association, the Sierra Foothills Conservancy, CAL FIRE, Sierra Pacific Industries, El Dorado Resource Conservation District, and others. The tours have brought more than 30 state and federal legislators, legislative staff, and/or members of the media into the Region to see and understand firsthand the impacts of fires like the Rim, King, and Butte Fires, and to discuss the urgency of addressing current forest health conditions.

Action Planned: Create and distribute the Fiscal Year 2013-14 Annual Report.

What was accomplished:

- The 2013-14 and 2014-15 Annual Reports were developed and distributed to a range of legislative committees, in addition to being transmitted to a large cross-section of individual legislators from within the Sierra Nevada Region and many others with whom the SNC cultivates positive working relationships.

Great Sierra River Cleanup

Action Planned: Continue to work with existing river cleanups throughout the Sierra to unite and expand them.

What was accomplished:

- Coordinated the 6th and 7th annual Great Sierra River Cleanup.
- A record number of more than 5,600 volunteers participated in 2014.
- Nearly 109 tons of trash and recyclables, an all-time high, were removed from Sierra rivers in 2015.

Action Planned: Recruit organizations in areas with no river cleanup programs to host cleanups in their areas.

What was accomplished:

- In both years, staff was able to recruit coordinated efforts in new areas.

Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council

Action Planned: Execute agreements to serve as covenant holder on lands donated to the USFS (up to 10 properties).

What was accomplished:

- Based on approval by the Board, SNC entered into a Joint Powers Agreement with the California Coastal Commission authorizing the SNC to assume conservation covenant and monitoring responsibilities for a Stewardship Council property (Eel River). This is the only Stewardship Council property being transferred to the USFS that is also outside of SNC's legal jurisdiction.
- All transactions were completed for approximately 920 acres of land along Cole Creek, a tributary to the North Fork Mokelumne River in Amador County. The SNC now holds an in-perpetuity conservation covenant with the USFS, as well as responsibility for the long-term monitoring of the conditions of the covenant.

Action Planned: Finalize agreements for SNC to carry out certain duties upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC and Stewardship Council finalized an agreement providing that the SNC would have ongoing responsibility for monitoring lands transferred to the USFS for which SNC holds a conservation covenant.

Action Planned: Initiate the funding mechanism to compensate the SNC for all tasks performed.

What was accomplished:

- Agreement was reached with the Stewardship Council to reimburse the SNC for its activities related to the finalization of all land transactions and the ongoing monitoring of lands placed under conservation covenant between the SNC and USFS.

Action Planned: Build a web-based document library for Pacific Gas and Electric Company lands that have been donated and approved through the California Public Utilities Commission.

What was accomplished:

- Preliminary discussions were held with the Stewardship Council addressing the SNC's long-term role in housing information regarding lands donated through the Council. At this point, a determination has not been made as to whether the SNC will manage information only for the lands for which it holds a conservation covenant, or for other lands as well. Discussions will continue.

Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery

Most of the planned actions for this project were not completed due to the passing of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) lead for this project at the end of 2014. As a result of this loss, and budgetary constraints, CDFW moved this project to a lower priority within the department. In late 2014, CDFW legal counsel determined that it was not going to pursue a Phase 2 report.

At this time, there are no new plans to move this project forward. Inyo County and Friends of Mt. Whitney continue to discuss options, and the Friends group continues to operate the facility as a visitor/interpretive center under the lease with CDFW.

For reference, these were the planned actions:

Action Planned: Pursue a decision by the CDFW and Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) about completing a Phase 2 environmental site assessment report. The Phase 2 report would provide information on the environmental condition of the facility – results may have an impact on the completion of the transfer if significant environmental issues are identified.

Action Planned: Pursue a decision by CDFW and WCB about completing the future use document, which would limit the types of uses that could occur on the property if it were transferred to a third party.

Action Planned: A decision by SNC whether to proceed with a potential transfer based on 1) the results of a Phase 2 report, 2) a finalized future use document, and 3) a credible plan in place for completing a potential transfer that has been agreed to by participating parties.

Action Planned: Confirmation by Inyo County of a third party in place for a potential transfer and a plan completed for future use.

Internal Operations

Action Planned: Develop new processes and evaluation tools to ensure SNC's training program is preparing staff to implement the SNC mission.

What was accomplished:

- Released a Training Evaluation Survey that allows staff to provide feedback on each class and teacher. The information received is then reviewed to inform future training decisions.

Action Planned: Ensure continuity of essential functions and operations following a catastrophic event by implementing SNC's Business Continuity Plan. Provide training for management as well as perform tabletop exercises and drills to test SNC's technology recovery plan.

What was accomplished:

- Each manager received an updated employee directory and directions for implementation of the phone tree in the case of a catastrophic event.
- Updated the Technology Recovery Plan and performed tabletop exercises and drills specific to information technology (IT) needs.

Action Planned: Improve SNC network and IT tools and services, including continuous hardware assessment and modifications. Upgrade to SharePoint 2013, including development and implementation of a migration plan. Analyze telecommunication and video conferencing systems to enhance communication mechanisms, ensuring collaboration, efficiency, and productivity across the organization.

What was accomplished:

- Completed SharePoint upgrade and data migration. Provided all staff training and identified super users.
- Optimized virtual server configuration for enhanced performance and additional backup options.
- Migrated to State Consolidated Email Service to align with state requirements.
- Worked with Verizon to analyze a possible migration to Voice over Internet Protocol.

Action Planned: Develop project management tools to ensure that the SNC's processes, systems, and tools are efficient and effective. This includes training staff to use the tools developed internally, as well as training and support for SNC users of Microsoft Project.

What was accomplished:

- Transitioned project management templates to SharePoint 2013. Worked with staff to develop processes for use of project sites within SharePoint and trained impacted staff in Microsoft Project 2013 for use with SharePoint 2013.

Action Planned: Convert our current accounting and budget systems over to the statewide Financial Information System for California (FISCAL) system to maximize efficiency and effectively manage SNC resources.

What was accomplished:

- Administrative staff attended numerous trainings and converted all necessary data over to FISCAL.
- In August 2015, SNC transitioned to using the FISCAL system.

Action Planned: Improve SNC's GIS storage procedures, ensuring that critical data can be accessed and recovered from any location.

What was accomplished:

- Established a relationship with CNRA Data Center to address SNC's GIS needs.
- Implemented monthly check-in meetings with SNC GIS and IT staff to evaluate GIS needs and issues.