

*Securing California's Environmental
and Economic Future*

Restoring the Health and Resilience of the Sierra
Nevada's Watersheds and Communities

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024

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*“When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”*
John Muir

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Muir’s observation decades ago aptly describes California’s continued connection to the Sierra Nevada. California’s past, present, and future are inextricably linked to the benefits provided by the Sierra Nevada Region. The rush for gold in the Sierra foothills lured people from all over the world to California, and the outstanding [recreational opportunities](#) offered by the Sierra Nevada Region draw millions of visitors today. California’s reservoir and aqueduct system, fed by Sierra Nevada rain and snow, provides more than [60 percent of the developed drinking and irrigation water](#) that fuels the world’s fifth largest economy. In addition, Sierra forests contain almost 50 percent of the state’s total aboveground forest carbon (more than any other region or sector), and its forests and agricultural lands are uniquely suited to help California in meeting its AB 32 greenhouse gas reduction goals.

It was an appreciation for the critical role this Region plays and the understanding of the need to protect and restore it that prompted a diverse group of legislators and private, non-governmental organizations to work together to create the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is a California state agency created by bipartisan legislation ([AB 2600](#)) signed into law in 2004. The mission of the SNC is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California. The statute that created the SNC emphasizes the importance of carrying out the mission in an integrated and complementary manner and the important role an organization providing strategic direction and resources to the Region can play. The SNC’s activities fall under seven statutorily mandated program areas:

- Increasing the opportunity for tourism and recreation in the Region
- Protecting, conserving, and restoring the Region’s physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources
- Aiding in the preservation of working landscapes
- Reducing the risk of natural disasters such as wildfire
- Protecting and improving water and air quality
- Assisting the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC’s program
- Enhancing public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public

The SNC Region includes all or part of twenty-two counties and is divided into six Subregions by its governing statutes. There are numerous differences among the Subregions based on a variety of natural, socio-economic, and historic factors, as well as current conditions. For example, massive tree mortality affects the South and South Central

Subregions in a significant manner, while the East Subregion's resources are impacted by concentrated recreational use. For additional details on each of the six Subregions, see [Appendix A: Subregions by the Numbers](#). This Plan and its implementation considers these differences, and the SNC will strive to deliver the services best suited to each Subregion.

To understand more about the SNC's jurisdiction, vision, purpose, guiding principles, and requirements, please see [Appendix B, Foundations of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy](#).

A Critical Region at Risk

The Sierra Nevada is an extraordinary region of statewide, national, and even global significance. Beyond the Region's contribution in terms of water and carbon storage, it sustains 60 percent of California's animal species and almost half of its plant species. The Sierra also supplies up to half of California's annual timber yield and produces 70 percent of the state's hydroelectric power, meeting 15 percent of the state's overall energy needs. Agriculture, forestry, and ranching are the most common land uses on private lands in the Sierra. These working landscapes produce a wide range of goods and contribute to the state's overall economy.

Beyond these essential services, the Sierra hosts more than 50 million recreational visits per year and is home to more than 600,000 residents in 200+ local communities – communities that depend in large part on natural resources for economic sustainability, job creation, recreation, and preservation of the community character and culture that are unique to the Sierra Nevada Region.

The SNC and its many partners are making progress in protecting the vital resources of the Region and in communicating the important benefits provided by the Region. However, even with the progress that has been made, the Region's watersheds and communities are facing unprecedented risks. For example, this decade sets the new record for wildfire acres burned on the western slope of the Sierra, with two fire seasons remaining. These fires are not only burning larger areas but are burning at far higher severity than in previous times. As if this isn't challenging enough, much of the Region has suffered unprecedented tree mortality resulting from unhealthy overgrown forests, drought, and the ensuing insect epidemic.

At the same time, many Sierra Nevada meadows and streams are degraded and in need of restoration and protection. Healthy watersheds are essential to a long-term stable supply of high-quality water and to the timing of Sierra origin waters reaching the reservoirs below, which then serve homes, businesses, and farms throughout California.

Furthermore, many Sierra communities and citizens continue to face severe economic challenges with numerous communities meeting the definition of "disadvantaged." The inextricable link between Sierra communities and the natural resources that surround them is obvious. As economic drivers such as timber production have lessened in recent decades, new economic opportunities have been difficult to realize in many communities. While recreation and tourism and agricultural/ranching operations remain important

economic contributors for much of the Region, diversifying local economies remains a generally shared objective.

To make matters more urgent, the Region is facing a steadily changing climate that will exacerbate current threats and create new ones. Changing precipitation patterns and increasing temperatures are having a profound impact on the Sierra landscape, affecting its environmental, economic, and social well-being and that of all California.

With all the challenges and heightened risks, significant opportunities are presenting themselves. The State has begun increasing both attention – Governor Jerry Brown’s [Executive Order B-52-18](#) called for the creation of a Forest Management Task Force – and financial investment for restoring and conserving the critical assets of the Sierra Nevada for all Californians. The latter includes increased expenditures from the California Climate Investments fund as well as funding in measures such as SB 5 (Proposition 68, the Parks, Environment, and Water Bond in June 2018) to restore and protect the Region’s watersheds and forests.

Meeting the Challenges Head-on: Overview and Context for this Plan

Since 2004, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy has been faced with a challenging mandate: to help restore, protect, and conserve the Region’s diverse natural, physical, and living resources. Since that time, the SNC has awarded over \$68 million in Proposition 84 and Proposition 1 funds for projects throughout the Region. In recent years, the SNC has been playing a stronger role in statewide policy and funding decisions addressing watershed health, water supply, carbon storage, and overall climate resilience. At the same time, we have continued to work with innovative collaborative efforts to identify workable solutions to the complex challenge of increasing the pace and scale of needed work.

Clearly Sierra Nevada circumstances have changed significantly since our first and subsequent Strategic and Action Plans were adopted, and the variability associated with a changing climate is altering what we thought we knew about watersheds and forests, leading to even more change in the future. These changes are having impacts on California’s fiscal health and environmental future in terms of increased wildfire and corresponding carbon emissions, decreased carbon storage capacity, habitat diversity, and recreation. And an ever-changing political landscape and lack of a long-term, sustainable source of project funding makes addressing these issues even more complicated. In 2016, the SNC Governing Board recognized the need to acknowledge and respond to these new challenges. A new strategic plan was called for that could identify known and possible challenges, focused on the issues we know but also retaining the flexibility to effectively address current and unanticipated problems that may arise in the coming years.

The Important Role of Partners

It is fully recognized that achievement of the Regional Goals in this plan will take far more than the efforts and resources of the SNC. Staff of the SNC are committed to working with, and on behalf of, regional partners to make significant progress under each of the Goals. It is expected that many partners will see the potential links to their projects and

priorities throughout the Plan. Where unclear, SNC commits to working proactively with them to identify ways to improve coordination and achieve shared objectives.

Our future efforts will build off the substantial partnerships in place with a wide range of state and federal agencies, local government, tribal organizations, and the various private and nonprofit partners working in these areas. We will continue to rely heavily on these partners while maintaining and increasing our support through funding, in-kind resources, and technical assistance

As a state agency, it is important that the SNC's work helps to implement various state policies, plans, and programs. This Strategic Plan has been crafted with several such efforts in mind, including the State climate, water, economic, and environmental goals. For more information on other plans considered during plan development, see [Appendix C – Plan Development](#).

The SNC views California's tribal organizations as vital partners in achieving holistic Regional health and protecting the Region's current and future resources and recognizes the important role traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) can play in guiding management and restoration, enhancement, and habitat protection projects. With this Strategic Plan, the SNC strengthens its commitment to proactively work with tribal representatives to achieve shared goals and support development of tribal resources across the Region.

Through this Strategic Plan, the SNC commits to continue and heighten its efforts to support and strengthen its partners through collaboration, capacity building, advocacy, and support for policy development, linking resources, and providing funding as available.

Strategic Assessment

As the organization approached the development of this Strategic Plan, first and foremost was the clear need to check in with partners to identify the most pressing issues and challenges across the Region from their perspectives. A Regional Strategic Assessment was conducted at the outset, and the structure, strategies, and many of the actions contained in this Plan and in the companion Action Plan were shaped and suggested by partners operating both within and outside of the Region. In addition, two public comment periods were held to invite the public to comment on the proposed strategies and the draft Strategic Plan. A significant goal of the Assessment and outreach was to utilize the information obtained to chart a collaborative course that allows the SNC to have the biggest and best impact on the Region over the next several years. Details related to the Strategic Assessment and the public input received can be found in [Appendix D – Stakeholder Participation in Plan Development](#).

Obviously, in a Region as large and diverse as the Sierra Nevada, not all voices and interests will agree on priorities, needs, or on the best way of achieving goals. However, the SNC's experience to date and the feedback received via the Strategic Assessment indicates a great deal of agreement on key issues. This Plan considers a broad range of opinions and perspectives and relies on SNC's governing statutes, mission, vision, and guiding principles to help determine the appropriate course of action. The SNC will

continue to rely upon sound, peer-reviewed science, current law and policy, and relevant funding criteria to help support projects and establish programs and priorities. The SNC will likewise continue to pursue and explore new information, ideas, and suggestions and adapt as necessary to implement this plan.

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Elevation of the WIP

A key element of this Strategic Plan is the establishment of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) as the SNC's overarching initiative, providing a holistic approach to watershed and community health and resilience. The WIP was launched in March 2015 with the goal of increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration by increasing investment, addressing policy impediments, and increasing infrastructure in the Region. Since that time, the WIP has been recognized as a model program for focusing resources and activities at the most difficult and dangerous problems and achieving success in breaking down organizational, political, and bureaucratic barriers. While the initial focus has been primarily on forest health issues, it was always intended that the WIP would approach watershed issues in a comprehensive manner. The launch of this Strategic Plan and the success in providing new funding to the SNC have provided the opportunity to expand the WIP beyond forest health.

Numerous State studies and plans now explicitly call out the need to address the issues that the SNC and its partners have been working on this past decade and point to the WIP as a clear path forward. The state's [Forest Carbon Plan](#), the Little Hoover Commission's [Fire on the Mountain: Rethinking Forest Management in the Sierra Nevada](#) report, the Legislative Analyst's Office's report on [Improving California's Forest and Watershed Management](#), and the [Governor's 2018-19 May Budget Review](#) all call out the WIP as a model for addressing forest and watershed health.

The magnitude of the challenges resulting from current conditions and a changing climate require a program that can truly increase the pace and scale of needed actions at a landscape level and across all issues. Restoring watershed health and resilience will remain a top priority under this plan, recognizing that other goals can only be achieved with this foundation in place. However, significant attention will be paid to conserving critical lands, promoting vibrant recreation and tourism opportunities, and supporting efforts to create community resilience. These efforts will be aided by ongoing communication, education, and advocacy activities designed to inform policy makers, beneficiaries, interest groups, and the public as to the benefits of a healthy, resilient Sierra Nevada and to provide greater understanding of the need for appropriate investment and policy action including the forest and beyond.

By using the WIP as the "umbrella" program for the goals of Healthy Watersheds and Forests, Vibrant Recreation and Tourism, Strategic Lands Conserved, and Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities, the SNC provides a more holistic perspective consistent with the SNC mission, recognizing the inherent interrelationships and dependencies between the Regional Goals. The Impactful Regional Identity Goal envisions the SNC and our partners actively communicating the value and benefits the Sierra Nevada Region provides to the state to garner the level of attention, funding, and public policy support that the Region needs to ensure that those benefits continue to support California.

This approach allows a wider and deeper group of partners and agencies to engage in the WIP, more clearly seeing their priorities and programs embodied in it. It likewise provides the SNC and its partners with the opportunity to tell a more compelling story of the full range of activities needed to restore resilience and how these activities relate to each other. The elevation of the WIP to drive the Strategic Plan positions the SNC to provide leadership and serve as a catalyst on issues of importance to the Region and the State of California. It also provides the platform for coordination of other efforts and initiatives consistent with the goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan.

Focus on Climate Impacts and Resiliency

California continues to lead the nation in efforts to address the issue of climate change with a variety of state programs in place that institute mitigation and adaptation efforts and actions. The Sierra Nevada Region plays a critical role in these efforts, and healthy forests provide the foundation for that important role. When healthy, the Region's forested landscapes sequester and store more carbon than any other eco-region of the State.

However, the Sierra Nevada forests of today have become net emitters rather than net sequesterers of carbon, due primarily to large severe wildfire and tree mortality. Governor Brown in his 2018 State of the State address acknowledged the important role of forests when he stated "... We also have to manage our forests – and soils – more intelligently." The Governor has convened a task force to thoroughly review the way our forests are managed and suggest ways to reduce the threat of devastating fires. They will also consider how California can increase resiliency and carbon storage capacity.

Trees in California should absorb CO₂, not generate huge amounts of black carbon and greenhouse gas as they do today when forest fires rage across the land.

*Governor Jerry Brown
2018 State of the State Address*

The strategies in this Strategic Plan will contribute significantly to restoring our forests to the positive role they can and should play. These efforts will serve to implement the Forest Carbon Plan (FCP), the State's plan for addressing forest health and resilience. The Goals and Strategies of this plan will assist in addressing the following FCP recommendations:

- Significantly increase the pace and scale of forest and watershed improvements on nonfederal lands through incentives and other mechanisms
- Support Federal goals and actions to improve forest and watershed health and resiliency
- Prevent forest land conversion through easements and acquisitions, as well as land use planning
- Innovate solutions for wood products and biomass utilization to support ongoing forest management activities
- Support key research, data management, and accountability

At the same time, it is inevitable that changes in climate will continue to occur. In the Sierra, the combination of higher temperatures and changing precipitation patterns (more rain and less snow as the general rule) will affect the environment and economy of the Region's watersheds and communities. This will require innovative, science-based approaches to address changes in plant and animal communities as they adapt to climate change. Furthermore, as the climate changes, recreation and tourism-dependent economies in the Region will be impacted and will also need to adapt. Warmer temperatures will impact the timing and availability of the water supply, affecting the economy and well-being of the entire state. Healthy watersheds and forests can help to regulate all those impacts moving forward.

The interconnected approach identified in this plan will focus SNC's work and coordinate with the work of others to ensure that investments maximize their potential climate mitigation and adaptation benefits and assist communities with resilience-building information, support, and resources.

Strategic Investment

The SNC recognizes that, regardless of the provision of new funding in 2018 and beyond, the funding allocated to the SNC for projects and activities to restore resilience to the Region's watersheds, forests, landscapes, and communities will not be sufficient to address the scope and scale of issues in the Region. But, working strategically with funding partners across the state, investments can be coordinated to increase the pace and scale of work that addresses issues across the Region and achieve the Regional Goals set out in this Plan.

The SNC commits to playing a lead role in organizing state and federal funding agencies and working with local governments, tribes, and non-governmental partners to develop a strategic, holistic approach to investment in and throughout the Sierra Nevada Region.

This means that at times, the SNC may be providing funding in support of various activities to carry out the strategies identified in this plan. In other instances, the SNC will rely on other funding partners to address identified needs in a coordinated manner.

SNC STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan (Plan) is designed to position the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to use its accumulated experience, expertise, and understanding to address more effectively the current conditions, challenges, and opportunities that exist in the Region. While the Plan is specific to the SNC, it can also serve to inspire new collaborations, coalesce partner efforts, and leverage funding opportunities, providing the basis for a more holistic approach to restoring watershed and community health and resilience.

This Plan is predicated on the understanding that the old way of doing business isn't working for the Region's watersheds or communities. The monumental task that the Region faces requires a bold new approach and for SNC and its partners to break down silos and address well-intentioned approaches that are proving to be impediments to action.

Plan Timeframe

The Plan will be implemented in ongoing collaboration with multiple partners throughout the Region, and its strategies will be carried out through specific actions identified in the separate 12- to 18-month Action Plans. This Plan is intended to guide the operations of the SNC for five years (2019-2024), following which an update to the plan will occur. If necessary, the SNC may make changes to this Plan prior to the planned update based on changing circumstances, new developments, and available resources.

Plan Organization

For purposes of this Plan, "Regional Goals" reflect Regional needs/goals that guide the development of the SNC's strategies, programs, and actions.

The following five Strategic Goals best represent the most critical needs identified across the Region:

Healthy Watersheds and Forests

Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities

Vibrant Recreation and Tourism

Strategic Lands Conserved

Impactful Regional Identity

The SNC is committed to carrying out activities in each of these goal areas to restore resilience to the Region and its communities. However, there are a number of factors that may affect the level of activity undertaken by the SNC for each goal, including available funding, guidance and restrictions placed upon the funding, state policy priorities, and the role of other state agencies. Consistent with available resources, SNC will continue to take actions in assessing needs, developing partnerships, addressing policy barriers, pursuing funding, and testing out new ways of doing business in each goal area.

Strategies have been developed based on the following model, as appropriate, which has been used to implement the WIP:

- Needs Assessment
- Developing Partnerships and Resources
- Policy
- Funding and Investments
- Design and Field Test New Ways of Doing Business
- Communications/Telling the Story

The strategies are designed to guide specific actions identified in an annual Action Plan. Examples of how some of the strategies might play out over time are provided in this Plan as a bulleted list under the strategy. It should be noted that the strategies are numbered solely for reference purposes and do not represent priorities. Plan priorities and focus will be identified as actions in the annual Action Plan.

REGIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

HEALTHY WATERSHEDS AND FORESTS

Restore the ecological health and resilience of watersheds and forests within the Sierra Nevada Region.

Sierra Nevada watersheds and forests are at a critical crossroads of crisis and opportunity, and the many benefits that they provide hang in the balance. Overgrown forests, an extended drought, and a changing climate have resulted in larger and more severe wildfire and catastrophic bark beetle infestation resulting in tree mortality exceeding 112 million dead trees throughout the Region from 2014-18. The result is proving devastating, not only to local communities and landscapes, but to California's air and water resources as well. But with these challenges come political interest and attention, which can, if appropriately harnessed, lead to the increased investment and policy changes necessary to improve ecological resilience, increase social, physical, financial, and cultural well-being of residents, and enhance enjoyment of the Region's visitors.

The SNC has been actively addressing these issues through funding, policy advocacy, and communications, promoting the need for a dramatic increase in the pace and scale of ecologically sound restoration. The SNC has initiated, funded, and participated in a wide range of collaborative groups working together to reach this goal and has provided millions of dollars to watershed and forest health projects through the Proposition 84 and Proposition 1 grant programs. In March 2015, SNC established the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) as an ambitious, visionary, and collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment, needed policy changes, and increased infrastructure to support restoration activities and communities.

Many positive developments have occurred in recent years, including increased funding and policy changes, but the Region remains far short of the goal of healthy, resilient watersheds. As the pace and scale of forest restoration continues, the SNC will work to ensure that efforts include the restoration of meadows, oak woodlands, streams, and lakes that play critical roles in the benefits offered by healthy watersheds. The Healthy Watersheds and Forests Regional Goal continues the SNC's priority focus on healthy forests and broadens efforts to better integrate these watershed elements into its programs, reinforcing the SNC's commitment to preserve, protect, and restore the health of the Region's watersheds regardless of the threats they face.

The SNC is uniquely situated to assist all the interests (be they federal, state, local, tribal, private, or nonprofit) in the protection and restoration of these watersheds. The SNC will continue its leadership in this area, challenging conventional "siloes" approaches, bringing partners together, identifying and implementing new ways of doing business, and looking for opportunities to link small efforts to create larger, landscape-scale impacts.

It should be noted that increasing wood and biomass processing infrastructure, as well as workforce, equipment, and contractor capacity, are critical components of forest and watershed health. Activities addressing these issues are included in some of the strategies below as well as in the Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Regional Goal.

Given all the above, the SNC will undertake the following strategies for the Healthy Watersheds and Forests Regional Goal:

Needs Assessment

Strategy 1: Build and improve upon the WIP assessment work already completed, continue to assess needs of, opportunities for, and impediments to restoration of Sierra Nevada forests, meadows, streams, lakes, and oak woodlands throughout the Region and identify highest priority SNC activities. This could include:

- Convening and engaging key partners to assist in assessing needs and in identifying and connecting current and planned programs that address restoration issues; determining how the SNC can strengthen these efforts through staff support, advocacy, and communications campaigns; working with partners, including federal land management agencies, to refine high-level assessments
- Assessing the needs and opportunities relating to wood/biomass infrastructure, workforce, and organizational capacity necessary to carry out restoration activities
- Utilizing data and information regarding critical restoration needs to develop funding strategies and meet policy and advocacy objectives; utilizing the Watershed Information Network (WIN) to share data and provide collaborative opportunities

Developing Partnerships and Resources

Strategy 2: Actively support the development and continued implementation of collaborative approaches at the Regional, watershed, and local levels to address forest and watershed health; provide leadership in promoting strategic alignment of projects across the landscape. This could include:

- Utilizing SNC staff and financial resources to support collaborative efforts; identifying and connecting new partners/collaborative needs and financial resources; sharing information and lessons learned across the Region
- Providing technical assistance for the development or enhancement of new collaboratives/groups

Funding and Investments

Strategy 3: Distribute available funds for watershed and forest restoration in a timely and strategic manner to achieve maximum positive impact; coordinate with other state and federal funding agencies to ensure appropriate investment in the Sierra Nevada. This could include:

- Establishing and implementing competitive and/or directed grant program(s) that get work done on the ground rapidly and effectively; directed programs are designed to address needs within a specific program (such as fire resilience or

meadow restoration) and/or geographic region (such as by county or subregion) or other priority

Strategy 4: Advocate for and secure increased funding for watershed restoration work in the Region, including funding for the SNC and other agencies and organizations. This could include:

- Working with partners to identify funding opportunities and assisting them in applying for funding to implement activities in the Sierra Nevada that support this Goal
- Directly seeking grants and other funding when appropriate and in the best interest of the Region

Policy

Strategy 5: Educate key decision makers and funders on the value of the use of prescribed and managed fire and other forest and watershed management tools, to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration.

Strategy 6: Identify and share science with decision makers and those that influence them to compel action and influence policy to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration.

Strategy 7: Identify and advocate for improvements to state and federal environmental processes affecting forest and watershed restoration projects designed to protect and improve watershed health and resilience.

Design and Field Test New Ways of Doing Business

Strategy 8: Establish, and continue engagement in, pilot projects across landscapes and ownerships that test new governance, finance, and implementation tools to increase the pace and scale of watershed restoration. This could include:

- Continuing to support partnerships and coalitions across the Region that design and directly implement pilot projects providing for focused, cooperative, and effective action across land ownerships to increase the pace and scale of watershed restoration; identifying impediments and process improvement affecting the pace and scale of restoration
- Identifying opportunities for, and/or designing and directly implementing, new pilot watershed restoration projects or regional initiatives like the model developed for the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI)

Strategy 9: Implement more efficient landscape planning and environmental impact review processes to get work done in watersheds on public and private lands. This could include:

- Assisting in the development and implementation of innovative and effective approaches to streamlining environmental compliance, including working with partners to develop specific parameters for large-scale, program level CEQA and/or NEPA on a specific landscape

- Development of a program level CEQA document for the Region; preparing a large-scale NEPA/CEQA crosswalk for specific large landscapes

Strategy 10: Increase the use of Master Stewardship Agreements and Good Neighbor Agreements, Cost Share Agreements, Joint Powers Agreements, Tribal Agreements, and other administrative agreements as appropriate to increase the pace and scale of ecological watershed restoration. This could include:

- Utilizing Good Neighbor Agreements to increase pace and scale of ecological forest restoration on USFS and BLM lands
- Convening and providing partners with technical assistance in developing and further utilizing administrative tools such as Master Stewardship Agreements to increase diverse funding to complete work on the ground

RESILIENT SIERRA NEVADA COMMUNITIES

Increase the environmental, economic, and social resilience of Sierra Nevada communities.

The SNC recognizes the unique challenges that face rural resource-dependent communities in the Sierra Nevada. The challenges in the Region have escalated over the last several decades. Wildfires now occur on a larger scale and with increased regularity, affecting more people and more acres. Unhealthy watershed conditions surrounding these communities make them particularly susceptible to drought and resulting impacts such as pest infestations. In addition, a changing climate will likely exacerbate the situation with increasing temperatures and more extreme weather.

Economically, many Sierra Nevada communities are experiencing a shrinking tax base, a scarcity of skilled workers, and changing demographics. While recreation, tourism, and working landscapes remain important elements of local economies, many communities are struggling with economic diversification and job creation. The result is that significant portions of the Sierra Nevada now meet the definition of "disadvantaged."

Historically, the SNC has expended considerable effort working to improve watershed and forest health with the goal of reducing natural resource-based threats that put rural communities at such risk. The thinking has been that managing forests to health and resilience creates jobs both on the ground in fuel loads reduction opportunities as well as in infrastructure/biomass utilization. Additionally, the SNC has provided a variety of services that include a grant program, grant writing workshops, facilitation services, and limited CEQA assistance to communities and build capacity in the Region. To bring the Sierra Nevada Region to holistic health, the communities within the Region need support that empowers their efforts to address urgent needs, plan for the future, develop capacity, and envision new tools and partnerships.

The SNC isn't positioned to address all these needs and issues. And admittedly, focusing significant effort and potentially significant resources in bringing communities to resiliency is somewhat new territory for this organization. It is recognized that, particularly in this goal area, partners are critical collaborators. In moving forward and determining the needs of Sierra Nevada communities, the focus will be on direct action that is at the center of the nexus between watershed health and resilient communities, and SNC staff will carry out activities that connect and help strengthen partner efforts, providing them with the resources and leverage that they need.

It is also recognized that there are many aspects to community resilience, including those that lie outside of the SNC's authority and focus. While SNC efforts will address those activities that are consistent with SNC authority, staff will work to coordinate with communities and organizations to ensure that all efforts are contributing to overall community resilience and are supportive of local climate adaptation efforts.

Given all the above, the SNC will undertake the following strategies for the Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities Regional Goal:

Needs Assessment

Strategy 1: Work with partners on the role/s that the SNC can play in assisting communities to identify vulnerabilities and deal with the climate, other challenges presented by degraded natural systems, and the resulting economic and social impacts. This could include:

- Convening partners already engaged in this work to determine areas where the SNC can take direct action and those where we should support other efforts; assisting communities in conducting vulnerability assessments; supporting the identification of long-term threats to resilience to balance short-term with long-term resilience priorities

Strategy 2: Coordinate with workforce development organizations, local community colleges, and communities to determine the best way/s to meet workforce needs associated with watershed restoration, forest products infrastructure, sustainable recreation and tourism, and working landscapes.

Developing Partnerships and Resources

Strategy 3: Develop and implement collaborative approaches that enhance community resiliency and bring entities together to solve problems and overcome obstacles. This could include:

- Continuing to participate in existing community collaborative efforts
- Identifying and connecting new partners/collaborative needs and financial resources
- Providing funding or other resources for the development of new community collaboratives and the support of existing collaboratives

Strategy 4: Build capacity and greater community resilience in local governments, communities, organizations, and tribes throughout the Region. This could include:

- Continuing and expanding technical assistance to community organizations, including grant application development and training in grant writing, environmental compliance, business services, and technology
- Funding direct services including facilitation for planning efforts, expanded grant writing, and project management instruction

Funding and Investments

Strategy 5: Distribute available funds in a timely and strategic manner to achieve maximum positive impact, multiple co-benefits, and leverage other state and federal funding agencies to improve community resiliency throughout the Region. This could include:

- Establishing a directed funding program in coordination with other governmental agencies and partners, which may focus on the needs within a specific program (like workforce development or biomass utilization), geographic region (such as by county or subregion), or other priority as identified

Strategy 6: Advocate for and secure increased funding to bolster community resilience throughout the Region, including funding for the SNC and other agencies and organizations. This could include:

- Working with local communities and partners to identify funding needs and opportunities and assisting them in applying for funding
- Directly seeking grants and other funding when appropriate and in the best interest of the Region

Policy

Strategy 7: Working with partners, identify policy changes that will assist in increased community resilience. This could include:

- Identifying and supporting the removal of policy barriers to the utilization of biomass/woody byproducts, workforce development, and resilience planning

VIBRANT RECREATION AND TOURISM

Enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Sierra Nevada Region.

The Sierra Nevada Region offers tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities that both rely on healthy watersheds and forests and support tourism and economic growth in California's rural communities. For many of the communities in the Region, revenue from recreation and tourism represents the largest portions of their economies, and jobs from recreation provide residents with the opportunity to work and thrive in their communities. Consistent with a surging national interest in outdoor recreation's role in the U.S. economy, the Sierra Nevada's outdoor recreation spectrum runs the full gamut: from highly developed ski resorts to backcountry wilderness; thousands of miles of trails for OHV, OSV, mountain biking, equestrianism, and hiking; world class fishing and hunting opportunities for a wide range of game; golf courses, marinas, wineries, and public parks; wildlife refuges, caves, and wild rivers. There is also a rich collection of cultural, historic, heritage, and tribal tourism attractions, which are tied to both California and national history.

Information from the California Travel Impacts Report 2000-2017, completed in May 2018 for Visit California and the Governor's Office of Business Development, indicates that the Sierra Nevada Region generates billions of dollars in revenue annually. Visit California, the state's tourism marketing agency, spends more than \$120 million per year marketing California to travelers around the world and relies heavily on the images and experiences produced in the Sierra Nevada Region. The collection of experiences available to Californians and visitors from around the world make the Sierra Nevada a critical component of the California Experience.

Today, however, many of these benefits are at risk. A changing climate will likely affect recreational activities dependent on snow as well as summer activities dependent on water resources. If the size and scope of severe fire and tree mortality continue to grow due to climate change and drought, these resources and economic contributors may go away completely and take centuries, if ever, to return. Furthermore, recent policy objectives on both the federal and state level actively reinforce the timeliness of SNC investment in recreation and tourism and encourage action to take advantage of rising opportunities.

Providing for vibrant recreation and tourism across the Region is fundamentally linked with the outcomes of the other Regional Goals. Sustainable recreation and tourism is dependent upon, and connected to, the health and resilience of Sierra Nevada's communities and the ecological health of California's watersheds and forests. Working with partners to thoughtfully implement the strategies supporting this goal will protect these benefits and the resources that are unique to the Sierra Nevada Region.

This goal specifically addresses the SNC statutory program requirements to provide increased opportunities for recreation and tourism and increased access to public lands in a more significant way than previous efforts, and it may contribute to implementing existing state, federal, and local recreation plans for the Region.

Given all the above, the SNC will undertake the following strategies for the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Regional Goal:

Needs Assessment

Strategy 1: Assess conditions, existing resources, needs, and opportunities to support or promote recreation and tourism throughout the Region and identify highest priority activities for the organization. This could include:

- Convening and engaging key partners to assess needs as well as current and planned programs to inform SNC actions, guide funding, and policy advocacy
- Collaborating with state and federal funding partners to identify the most beneficial role/s for the SNC to play

Developing Partnerships and Resources

Strategy 2: Identify, create, and participate in partnerships to support the development of vibrant recreation and tourism throughout the Region. This could include:

- Providing funding, staff, and/or technical assistance to enhance and support the National Geographic Geotourism project
- Providing financial and technical assistance to recreation-based partnerships and coalitions across the Region
- Assisting local efforts to obtain federal non-regulatory designations that can attract funding and elevate recognition, such as National Heritage Areas and National Recreation Trails
- Establishing a Sierra Nevada presence in the national outdoor recreation movement through working group participation

Funding and Investments

Strategy 3: Distribute available funds for development of sustainable recreation and tourism throughout the Region in a timely and strategic manner to achieve maximum positive impact, coordinating with other state and federal funding agencies and partners. This could include:

- Establishing and implementing competitive and/or directed grant programs that get work done on the ground, including acquisitions for public access, rapidly and effectively; directed programs are designed to address needs within a specific program (such as fire resilience or meadow restoration) and/or geographic region (such as by county or subregion) or other priority

Strategy 4: Advocate for and secure increased funding for sustainable recreation and tourism development to increase access to public lands in the Region, both for the SNC and for other agencies and organizations. This can include:

- Working with other state partners to identify, support, or develop projects or programs that help achieve state recreation priorities

- Providing technical, financial, and/or staff support for community-led efforts to establish funding streams for tourism and recreation development or marketing as well as recreation facilities investment and development
- Directly seeking grants and other funding when appropriate and in the best interest of the Region

Design and Field Tests New Ways of Doing Business

Strategy 5: Establish pilot projects or collaboratives that test innovative governance, finance, and implementation tools that can achieve recreation and tourism objectives across the Region. This could include:

- Providing funding and/or technical support to partners in establishing pilot recreation collaboratives or regional initiatives like the model developed for the Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative (TCSI)
- Supporting and leveraging innovative public-private partnerships to address recreation and tourism-related challenges, such as infrastructure and transportation challenges

STRATEGIC LANDS CONSERVED

Permanently protect high-benefit lands that are threatened with conversion, represent unique natural characteristics, or are critical for resilience to climate change.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy recognizes land conservation as an important tool for achieving holistic watershed health and overcoming the management challenges of landscape ownership fragmentation. The SNC provided significant funding for land acquisition in its Proposition 84 grant program, the SNC's inaugural funding program. Over time, as existing funding decreased, the SNC increasingly focused limited resources on the most pressing issues in the Region, such as forest health. While not actively funding land acquisition, the SNC has continued to support partner efforts to gain funding from other state and federal programs.

The Strategic Lands Conserved Regional Goal focuses SNC efforts on strategies to protect high-risk, high-priority lands, including agricultural lands, oak woodlands, and wildlife corridors that are threatened by conversion, possess unique natural characteristics, or provide critical resilience to climate change. These lands can provide a range of benefits including working landscapes, recreation opportunities, and protection of unique, cultural, and natural areas and key wildlife habitat. Additionally, climate change is likely to have impacts as yet unseen on the Region and strategically conserving land to protect the wide range of benefits provided by the Region will become increasingly important as the Region adapts to further changes in the future.

The SNC will consider the opportunities where it is feasible to provide public access to lands conserved. This consideration will be more clearly articulated in grant guidelines, taking into account the compatibility of public access with the project goals and objectives. Also, SNC will consider funding the acquisition of lands for the express purpose of public access under the Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Regional Goal.

Given all the above, the SNC will undertake the following strategies for the Strategic Lands Conserved Regional Goal:

Needs Assessment

Strategy 1: Assess the land conservation priorities of other agencies, partners, and existing funding programs to identify the highest priority SNC activities to support strategic land conservation. This could include:

- Identifying and connecting current and planned programs that support these activities to assist in determining the best role for the SNC
- Completing and/or updating critical Regional land conservation needs-assessment efforts undertaken by partners, identifying lands that will provide the greatest benefits and face the greatest risks

Funding and Investments

Strategy 2: Distribute available funds, according to their criteria, in a timely and strategic manner to realize maximum positive benefit. This could include:

- Establishing and implementing a grant program funding fee title and/or conservation easement acquisitions guided by the needs assessment and agency coordination
- Coordinating with other state and federal funding agencies to identify programmatic and geographic priorities to determine the most effective use of SNC bond funds and ensure strategic investment at a landscape scale

Strategy 3: Advocate for and secure increased funding for strategic land conservation in the Region, including funding for the SNC and other agencies and organizations. This could include:

- Advocating for Sierra Nevada-relevant funding with other state and federal agencies and the legislature
- Directly seeking grants and other funding when appropriate and for the best interest of the Region

Design and Field Test New Ways of Doing Business

Strategy 4: Work with interested county representatives and land conservation partners to (1) explore the utilization of land using planning tools to achieve conservation objectives and (2) address tax neutrality concerns.

IMPACTFUL REGIONAL IDENTITY

Elevated statewide recognition of the value and benefits the Sierra Nevada provides and increased integration of the importance of the Sierra Nevada into state policy and funding decisions.

The Sierra Nevada Region provides irreplaceable ecosystem services to the state of California which are often taken for granted in policy and funding decisions. From the beginning, elevating the profile of the Sierra Nevada Region and all the benefits the Region provides to the state has been an SNC priority, and, in recent years, staff resources have been dedicated to making progress towards this objective. The SNC has placed a focus on establishing itself as a credible source of information by interpreting and sharing relevant research, creating messaging that supports science-based policy and funding decisions, and developing materials that clearly illustrate the holistic connection between a healthy Sierra Nevada Region and a strong, vibrant future for California. The SNC's primary focus has been on educating key policy makers and advocating for state and federal funding decisions that support the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region.

As the climate changes in the Sierra Nevada, the need to recognize resilient watersheds and forests and their value will become even more critical. Connecting the health of the natural landscapes of the Sierra Nevada to the recreation and tourism experiences they provide and the communities they sustain will be important. Urban-rural partnerships need to be developed and strengthened with those benefiting from the Region in order to increase investments in Sierra Nevada resources and resilience activities. The SNC also recognizes that engaging partners who share the vision for the Region is essential in making further progress and supporting innovative models for financing upper watershed restoration activities using funds or financing from urban/downstream partners will be critical. Focus in this area will also ensure that Sierra Nevada values and benefits are appropriately recognized and integrated into statewide policy and funding discussions.

With the WIP serving as the umbrella program for activities under this Plan, the SNC will build upon the substantial recognition received to date and will utilize the WIP as the platform for communications efforts. As the WIP network of partners expands, there is a great opportunity for a stronger, more coherent voice for the Sierra Nevada.

Given all the above, the SNC will undertake the following strategies for the Impactful Regional Identify Regional Goal:

Developing Partnerships and Resources

Strategy 1: Work with partners strategically to share messaging, communicate lessons learned across the Region, and amplify partner needs and successes in a way that showcases how valuable work in the Sierra is to California and educates decision makers about actions they can take to support, expand, and improve that work. This could include:

- Working closely with grantees to promote project successes by developing project videos, hosting tours, providing presentation opportunities, etc.

- Establishing an in-Region communications network that supports sharing messaging and lessons learned among partners
- Providing financial support for conferences, outreach events, volunteer activities, community programs, and experiential learning opportunities that encourage local stewardship and advocacy for the Sierra Nevada

Strategy 2: Seek out and engage partners and beneficiaries who share the SNC’s vision for the Region.

Strategy 3: Actively reach out and engage leaders and influencers in urban and downstream communities that benefit from the Sierra Nevada. This could include:

- Convening strategic meetings with urban leaders with the goal of increasing the understanding of, and support for, investment in Sierra Nevada resources and resilience activities

Strategy 4: Build and maintain SNC’s science and research network to ensure that SNC remains a credible source for science-based policy recommendations. This could include:

- Reviewing key relevant research papers and studies, engaging directly with scientists and authors, and communicating key findings to inform policy

Strategy 5: Build and maintain SNC’s media network to establish the SNC as a credible voice for the Sierra Nevada Region. Use sound science and data to become the ‘go-to’ place for information and stories about the Sierra.

Funding and Investments

Strategy 6: Seek funding to bolster and support communications efforts that elevate the image of the Sierra Nevada and educate Californians on the benefits of healthy California watersheds and forests.

Policy

Strategy 7: Educate and influence decision and policy makers to benefit the Sierra Nevada Region, particularly as it relates to climate change response, adaptation planning, and increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration. This could include:

- Developing and distributing messaging and materials that educate decision makers about the value of work being done in the Sierra Nevada, the alignment of this work with broader statewide goals, and outlining long-term investment needs
- Creating and utilizing communications products including social media and blogs to communicate policy recommendations and key science
- Developing a platform for the research community to interpret and push new research to land managers, policy makers, and partners

Communications/Telling the Story

Strategy 8: Create outreach and education campaigns that encourage decision makers to get to know their watersheds through experiential learning activities throughout the Sierra Nevada Region. This could include:

- Working with partners or key legislators to host tours for decision makers, the media, and/or other key influencers that educate attendees about the connections between action needed in the Sierra Nevada and the state's policy goals
- Supporting conferences, volunteer activities, and experiential learning events that provide opportunities to educate target audiences about the Sierra Nevada Region
- Creating or participating in a pilot Sister City, Adopt-a-Watershed program, or something similar that links targeted beneficiaries with the source, and developing an information sharing campaign (could include field tours, presentations, speaker series, etc.)

Strategy 9: Promote and/or amplify partner efforts in each Regional Goal area through the SNC's communications program

Strategy 10: Utilize the Sierra Nevada Watershed Information Network (WIN) to capture data in a spatial way and/or showcase relevant data that demonstrates how watershed restoration in the Sierra Nevada is critical to the Region and state. This could include:

- Developing and deploying an online, searchable Resilience Dashboard that monitors overall regional resilience and tracks progress towards successfully achieving the Regional Goals contained in the Strategic Plan of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Plan Implementation

At this moment in time, the SNC stands at a crossroad related to Strategic Plan implementation and funding. To fully implement Plan Strategies and achieve Plan Goals, significant funding needs to be provided, and the potential for direct funding to the SNC for these purposes exists in the form of Proposition 3 on the ballot in November 2018. This Plan has been developed to be flexible enough for full implementation if funding is provided, or more focused implementation if not. Any changes in implementation that are needed to reflect the outcome of the November election will be reflected in the final Plan to be released in mid-November.

The SNC will allocate and deploy its resources and coordinate with a wide range of partners to implement this plan through the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP). While the Plan is intended to guide SNC operations over a five-year period, it is essential to maintain the flexibility to adapt to new or changed circumstances over that timeframe. As such, the SNC may update the Plan from time to time.

It is also intended that the WIP continue to serve as the State of California's implementation plan for achieving policy outcomes in the areas of watershed health and community resilience, as well as serving as a roadmap for state-federal efforts on these issues. Partnerships with other state and federal agencies will be critical in Plan success.

Specific details of how these strategies will be implemented each year will be provided in the annual Action Plan, to be approved by the Governing Board. The initial plan will guide operations from January 2019 through June 2020. Subsequent plans will be for each fiscal year. Actions will be specific and measurable and will be expected to be completed within the relevant 12- to 18-month period unless otherwise noted. Progress in completing annual actions will be reported to the Board and in the SNC's Annual Report.

Measuring Success and Reporting Regional Resilience Progress

Developing and tracking measures of success in meeting the Regional Goals are complicated, given the breadth and complexity of the Region and the Goals. Staff will be tracking progress by identifying whether actions proposed have been undertaken on an annual and ongoing basis. However, staff is also committed to working with partners to develop indicators that, when taken together, will begin to measure ecological health and climate resilience across the landscape. These indicators will be used in completing a five-year Regional Resilience Report, which will interpret the data, helping to determine progress toward the ultimate goal of Restoring the Health and Resilience of the Sierra Nevada's Watersheds and Communities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Subregions by the Numbers

Pending inclusion in final Strategic Plan. Information to include demographic information by Subregion, including counties, population, size, etc. and identify current Subregional Representatives, SNC grants to date, projects of note completed, and other noteworthy information. Subregional videos are being completed to highlight the value of each Subregion and one or more projects completed with the assistance of the SNC.

Appendix B: Foundations of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Jurisdiction

The SNC's service area – stretching from Modoc County in the north to Kern County in the south – covers 25 million acres and all or part of 22 counties. Comprising 25 percent of California's total land area, it is one of the largest conservancy regions in the state. The jurisdiction includes the mountains and foothills of the Sierra Nevada range, the Mono Basin, Owens Valley, the Modoc Plateau, and a part of the southern Cascade Range, including the Pit River Watershed. The Region is made up of 17 watershed assessment areas, providing vital water to the rest of the State. The statute establishing the SNC divides the Region into six smaller Subregions.



Staff are headquartered in Auburn, California, but field representatives also work from various locations throughout the Region, including Mariposa, Quincy, Mammoth Lakes, and Three Rivers.

Governance

The SNC is governed by a 16-member Board with 13 voting members divided almost evenly between seven state-level appointments and six local seats filled by members of county Boards of Supervisors in each of the SNC's six Subregions.

The members include:

- Secretary for Natural Resources Agency (or his or her designee)
- Director of Finance (or his or her designee)
- Three members of the public appointed by the governor
- Two members of the public, one appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and one by the Senate Rules Committee
- Six county supervisors whose districts are within the Region, each representing one of the six Subregions
- Three non-voting liaison advisers: one each from the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management

Program Requirements

In accordance with the statute establishing the SNC, all agency activities are based on the principles of balance, cooperation, and equity. The statute requires that the SNC:

- Support efforts that advance environmental preservation and the economic and social well-being of Sierra residents in a complementary manner.
- Work in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties in carrying out the SNC's mission.
- Make every effort to ensure that, over time, SNC funding and other efforts are spread equitably across each of the various Subregions and among the program

areas, with adequate allowance for the variability of costs associated with individual Subregions and types of projects.

SNC Vision

The SNC's vision for the future is that the magnificent Sierra Nevada Region enjoys outstanding environmental, economic, and social health, with vibrant communities and landscapes sustained for future generations. In this vision:

- Rich and diverse natural, physical, and living resources are protected and conserved.
- Healthy, diverse, and economically sustainable local communities thrive, prepared for and protected from natural disasters.
- Californians value and invest in healthy watersheds that provide high-quality water, spectacular scenery, and important wildlife habitat.
- Sustainable working landscapes provide environmental, economic, and social benefits to the Region.
- The Region's cultural, archeological, and historical resources are preserved, visited, and treasured.
- Healthy and sustainable tourism, recreation, and commercial activities are valued and encouraged.
- The role of the forest in sequestering and storing carbon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions is recognized and enhanced.

SNC Guiding Principles

The SNC is guided in its operations by several principles developed as part of its initial strategic planning process:

Operations

- The SNC conducts operations openly. Decision-making is transparent, and the SNC always strives to improve communications throughout the Region.
- The SNC strives to maintain neutrality so all interested parties are provided an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the SNC's activities.

Key Objectives

- The SNC seeks to "add value" and build upon existing community and Regional efforts.
- The SNC brings a Regional focus to the issues of the Sierra Nevada, collecting and sharing information across the Region and communicating the benefits and contributions of the Region.
- The SNC encourages community-based solutions and assists communities with technical expertise, information, and resources necessary to achieve local solutions.
- The SNC uses the best available information and science in making decisions, identifying opportunities to fill information and technical gaps, and building on and expanding community information.
- The SNC informs and educates the public throughout the Region and the state about the substantial benefits the Sierra Nevada provides to all Californians,

including providing clean water for many uses outside the Sierra and the importance of protecting and enhancing the environmental well-being of the Region.

- The SNC strives to identify and implement activities that result in integrated environmental, economic, and social benefits rather than “either/or” outcomes.

Implementing Programs

- The SNC develops program priorities considering the input received through community outreach efforts and seeks to meet community needs.
- The SNC is flexible in implementing its programs, recognizing the need to act based on opportunity, available funding, local and Regional differences, and statewide interest.
- The SNC gives priority to multi-benefit projects and integrated activities (those that address more than one of the SNC’s program objectives).
- The SNC encourages projects and activities that leverage other organizations’ (government, private, and nonprofit) competencies and funding.
- The SNC evaluates projects considering what is occurring on surrounding lands, cognizant of potential impacts to those landscapes.
- The SNC purchases and/or creates incentives for the purchase, where practical, of resources for goods and services within the Sierra Nevada Region. The SNC diligently seeks opportunities to improve the economic well-being of communities in the Region.
- The SNC makes every effort to ensure that, over time, SNC funding and other efforts are spread equitably across Subregions and program areas, with adequate allowance for the variability of costs associated with individual Subregions and types of projects.

Working with Others

- The SNC emphasizes cooperation with local governments and other governmental, tribal, and non-governmental partners in providing information, technical assistance, and financial support to assist in meeting mutual goals.
- The SNC coordinates and collaborates with all partners to achieve research, project funding, and program goals.
- The SNC convenes and facilitates interested parties to seek solutions to difficult problems to achieve environmental, economic, and social benefits.
- The SNC respects the mission, responsibilities, and obligations of other agencies and organizations.

Current Funding Sources

The SNC’s current budget is made up of funds from the following sources:

- The California Environmental License Plate Fund which serves as the primary source for staff and operations funding
- Proposition 84, The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coast Protection Bond Act of 2006. Proposition 84 allocated \$54 million in bond funds to the SNC. (Note: most of these funds have been expended.)

- Proposition 1, The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014. Proposition 1 allocated \$25 million in bond funds to the SNC.
- Proposition 68, the Parks, Environment, and Water Bond (June 2018). Proposition 68 provided the SNC with \$55 million dollars in bond funds.

Appendix C: Plan Development

Development of Regional Goals and Strategies

The Goals in this Plan represent broad, aspirational outcomes for the SNC and the Region. The Strategies in this Plan represent the specific approaches the SNC will undertake in contributing to achieving the Regional Goals. They have been developed with an understanding of the SNC's available and anticipated resources, expertise, and experience and with substantial input from dozens of partners and stakeholders. They also represent the SNC's assessment of where it can best add value, understanding the roles that a variety of other agencies and organizations play in these efforts. The Strategies are intended to best position the SNC to leverage its work with that of a wide range of partners to magnify the impact of these cumulative efforts. In some cases, this means SNC will be directly taking actions to achieve an outcome; in other instances, its role will be supporting and assisting partners.

Strategies have been developed to guide staff in achieving the Regional Goals. Strategies have been organized based on the following model, which has been used to implement the WIP:

- Needs Assessment: What are the highest priority issues or most critical problems to address? In some goal areas the needs are already well defined; in others, such as Vibrant Recreation and Tourism and Resilient Communities, we must first determine these needs before we can begin to develop a pathway to improvement.
- Developing Partnerships and Resources: Who is doing critical work in this area, and what is the proper role of the SNC? Who should be convened to address critical issues? What capacity building might be needed, and how can it be provided?
- Policy: Who holds the key to rapidly addressing critical or widespread issues, and what needs to be done to affect change? Is it educational, advocacy/outreach-based work? Do we need new science or data to demonstrate the risks and opportunities that will move lawmakers to act? Or are new laws needed to protect the Region's resources and allow them to grow and thrive? What role should the SNC play in this area?
- Funding and Investments: Immediate and ongoing funding is needed to treat the landscape and build the necessary infrastructure for healthy forests, vibrant recreation, resilient communities, and protected lands. Strategies in this area will include seeking new funding and distributing existing funding to meet the highest identified priorities.
- Design and Field Test New Ways of Doing Business: Governmental entities can get in a rut or be constrained by regulation and bureaucracy, making little to no progress and spending significant amounts of time and money. Collaborative pilot projects can often demonstrate a new way of getting things done, encouraging a fresh look and redoubled efforts to address barriers to action. In this area, SNC will work with partners to try new strategies and will document and share the outcomes.
- Communications/Telling the Story: Developing strong outreach and educational programs is a cornerstone of change – especially when voters, rate-payers, lawmakers, and private funding institutions need to support that change. In this area

the SNC is committed to focusing educational efforts to promote and implement its programs and those of its partners.

Audience

This Plan is intended to serve several audiences. It sets out the SNC Governing Board's direction to staff regarding programs and priorities and provides guidance on use of staff and other resources. It will also serve as the SNC's approach to increasing resilience to climate change in the watersheds and communities of the Sierra Nevada. It is intended to identify connections to broader statewide initiatives, ensuring that we are making an impact that is greater than what could be done alone. Finally, and equally important, the Plan is intended to communicate to our partners – local governments, state and federal agencies, tribes, private landowners, conservation organizations, community organizations, and private conservation funders – and to the public, the role of the Conservancy in protecting and enhancing the Region's resources and communities.

Consideration of Other State Plans

This Plan builds upon and integrates several state efforts, including:

- [California Water Action Plan](#) and its [Implementation Report](#) – The 2016 Water Action Plan identifies 10 critical actions that are needed to address California's most pressing water issues and to lay the groundwork for a sustainable resilient future. The Implementation Report provides a summary of key Action Plan activities underway or planned. Action 4 is "Protect and Restore Important Ecosystems" and includes restoring key mountain meadow habitat and managing headwaters for multiple benefits. Under these activities, state conservancies such as the SNC are tasked with developing Proposition 1 grant programs to assist with the restoration of watersheds critical to California's water supply systems.
- [Safeguarding California Climate Adaptation Plan](#) and [Assembly Bill 32 Scoping Plan Updates](#) - The 2014 Safeguarding California Plan is part of the state's continuing efforts to reduce impacts and prepare for climate risks. This plan, which updates the 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy, highlights climate risks in nine sectors: Agriculture, Biodiversity and Habitat, Emergency Management, Energy, Forestry, Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems, Public Health, Transportation, and Water. The 'Forestry' section outlines the importance of watershed protection, provides models for ecosystem services financing, and outlines relevant policy actions taken to date. The AB 32 Scoping Plan update identifies opportunities to leverage existing and new funds to further drive GHG emission reductions through strategic planning and targeted low carbon investments. It defines the Air Resources Board's five-year climate change priorities and sets the groundwork to reach long-term goals.
- [Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investment Plan Updates](#) and [Funding Guidelines](#) – The plan sets the guidelines for use of the Cap and Trade Auction proceeds 2016-2019 and the funding guidelines outline the statutory requirements for purposes of state agency funding programs. Investment is encouraged in clean biomass conversion technologies for renewable energy generation and in protection, restoration, and management of natural and working lands to maximize carbon sequestration and reduce GHG and black carbon emissions.

- [California State Wildlife Action Plan](#) – The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) completed the State Wildlife Action Plan Update in 2015 after a multi-year effort involving conservation groups, agencies, tribes, private landowners, and other stakeholders. The action plan identifies and prioritizes at-risk species and habitats and provides conservation strategies to help protect and conserve these species. The approved action plan is a requirement for federal grant funding programs that benefit at-risk species such as the Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep, Coho salmon, and others. The chapter covering the Central Valley and the Sierra Nevada regions describes how altered ecosystems impact habitats important for maintaining California’s wildlife diversity and abundance.
- [California Water Plan](#) – The California Water Plan is the State's strategic plan for sustainably managing and developing water resources for current and future generations. It is a voluminous document with detailed information about each of the state’s hydrological regions, resource management strategies, and plans for coordination, finance, and infrastructure. The plan is updated every five years; the 2018 update is expected in the latter part of the year. The SNC is a member of the State Agency Steering Committee and has participated in the plan’s updates, providing information for the Mountain Counties Area Regional Report and advancing the Region’s importance to the state’s water strategies.
- [California Fire Plan](#) – The California Fire Plan is the state's road map for reducing the risk of wildfire. By placing the emphasis on what needs to be done long before a fire starts, the Fire Plan looks to reduce firefighting costs and property losses, increase firefighter safety, and to contribute to ecosystem health. The plan is a joint effort between the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and CAL FIRE, and it is revised every few years with the most recent revision in 2016. The plan focuses on the goals of reducing and preventing the impacts of wildland fire through suppression and fire prevention. Included are land-use planning, community wildfire protection plans, increased fire resistance in assets at risk, improved availability of information, and better interagency coordination in the face of climate change. Many objectives are in alignment with SNC’s efforts to promote forest health on private and public lands.
- [Forest and Rangelands Assessment](#) – CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) is required by the California legislature to produce periodic assessments of the forests and rangelands of California. The assessments are completed every five years; the last one as late as 2015. They are used to design the USFS State and Private Forestry programs which provide technical assistance to California land managers.
- [Forest Carbon Plan](#) – The SNC was a member of the Forest Climate Action Team which worked on this plan for several years. The plan, adopted in May 2018, is a comprehensive analysis of managing California’s forest landscapes in a changing climate. Acknowledging the uncertainties of climate change impacts, the plan lays out recommended actions to achieve healthy and resilient forests based on what we know today about our forests and how climate change will evolve in California. The Plan acknowledges the SNC’s WIP program as a model for collaborative efforts to address forest health and resilience at a landscape level.

- [Bioenergy Action Plan](#) – This plan was adopted by the California Energy Commission in 2012, based on input from the Bioenergy Interagency Working Group and other stakeholders. The goal of the plan is to promote utilization of the abundance of biomass residues from the state’s agricultural, forest, and urban waste streams to produce renewable energy. The plan outlines a coordinated state agency approach to addressing challenges and maximizing opportunities for the development of bioenergy projects that promote economic development and environmental benefit. The SNC is named as the lead agency to promote the development of community-scale woody bioenergy facilities and as a supporting agency in other actions related to forest bioenergy development.

Appendix D: Strategic Assessment and Public Input - Stakeholder Participation in Plan Development

Strategic Assessment: The Strategic Action Plan approved by the Board in December 2015 was intended to guide SNC priorities and actions through June 2018. At the June 2017 Board Meeting, however, the Board directed staff to begin a strategic assessment to consider the potential impacts of contemporary yet unaddressed issues. The Board also directed staff to seek out potential partners who have not participated in earlier planning efforts and to gather and incorporate significant input from stakeholders who operate outside of the Region but who are beneficiaries of the ecosystem services emanating from the Region. Beginning in July 2017 and spanning eight months, SNC staff engaged in extensive outreach, conducting dozens of meetings and gathering written and verbal ideas and input from hundreds of stakeholders. Additional Board input on the planning and implementation of the Strategic Action Plan was provided by the Board Subcommittee, Boardmembers Doug Teeter and Terry O'Brien. The Board Subcommittee met quarterly during the process, providing additional guidance on the development of the Strategic Assessment and its components. Outreach and analysis of input gathered were broken into three Tracks.

Track 1: This track pursued input from stakeholders outside the Region, whose concerns and recommendations are unlikely to have been incorporated into prior strategic plans. Among others, the SNC reached out to 50+ members of the California Water Action Collaborative. These included major companies and agricultural organizations who operate outside of the Region but who are dependent on clean, reliable water from the Region, and who have come together to focus on improving the water reliability across the state. As a follow up to the request for written ideas, staff participated in face-to-face meetings with representatives of some of these entities. Written input supported efforts taken by the SNC to rely on science to help make progress in water and forest resiliency, to bring rural and urban stakeholders together, to support research and pilot projects demonstrating the value of forest and watershed restoration projects, to monetize ecosystem service values, and to understand and represent the needs of all stakeholders. Significant input was gathered in this track, representing the perspectives of agriculture and food processing industries.

Track 2: This track pursued input from current Regional stakeholders and sought their view points on needs of the Region and how the SNC is doing in identifying and meeting those needs. Written input was gathered through the middle of November 2017. Public meetings in all six Subregions were conducted in January 2017 and with various interest groups through February 2018. Staff and the Board Committee assigned to provide guidance to the Strategic Assessment met with key stakeholders representing 20+ nonprofit and non-governmental organizations. Various SNC representatives also met with additional focus groups, including state and federal partners, policy advocates, leaders in communications and outreach, and county supervisor liaisons.

Track 3: This track provided the opportunity for SNC staff and Boardmembers to offer their own ideas and observations and to consider the input gathered in Tracks 1 and 2 in the development of specific strategies for inclusion in a new strategic plan. Issues,

observations, and recommendations gathered in the first Tracks were evaluated and considered as the draft plan was developed. Activities in this track were completed in February 2018.

A summary of input obtained in all three Tracks has been provided below.

Key Findings from Strategic Assessment Stakeholder Input Process

The following “themes” were common to all or nearly all the Regional Goal Areas:

1. Climate change and the associated impacts in our Region (fire, drought, pests) is a key and urgent issue that needs to be considered in all strategies developed to protect the Region, from forest management to developing new sources of funding.
2. There is a need for more education and outreach to inform the public and decision makers about the issues.
3. It is beneficial to plan activities and strategies collaboratively and holistically.
4. The Region has many distinctive, diverse needs and views the SNC as an agency that can assist.
5. Additional funding is needed to address issues. The SNC can help organizations take advantage of existing funding opportunities and aligning state funding programs.
6. Science and data collection, interpretation, application, and meaningful dissemination are needed to support the needs of the region and to communicate best available practices for the management of natural resources.
7. The SNC can play an important role in funding and incubating pilot and demonstration programs.
8. ‘Learning communities’ need to be developed to share information and strategies throughout the Region.
9. Ecosystem services need to be monetized and utilized to support policy and outreach efforts.
10. An important role for the SNC is as convener both within the Region and between the Region and urban areas and other state/federal agencies.

Significant input was provided that contributed to the development of the Regional Goals. Listed by their goals, common ideas were:

Healthy Watersheds and Forests

11. Forest and watershed health should remain a top priority for the SNC because the threat of devastating wildfires, attacks from beetles, climate change, etc. is too great.
12. Prescribed and managed fire need to be employed to manage Sierra forests in addition to the use of mechanical tools. Workforce development (training), policy, and education outreach should be focused to overcome obstacles and increase support for the use of these tools.

13. Large landscape environmental planning (NEPA/CEQA) is lacking; therefore, it is difficult to implement on the ground work. Either policy needs to be changed or an entity that is capable of developing environmental plans needs to be created.
14. More science is needed to support this goal by prioritizing projects, establishing baseline studies, post-project monitoring, and data-sharing to demonstrate the benefits of various treatment methods.
15. More infrastructure is needed to utilize the amount of biomass that needs to be removed from Sierra forests to make them healthy and resilient.
16. There is a need for more efficient collaboration between state, federal, and private landowners for project implementation. Bureaucracy and jurisdiction often impede progress.

Vibrant Recreation and Tourism

17. Invest in new and existing trails that provide access to public land.
18. Roads and trails have a direct impact on natural resources and, due to a lack of maintenance funding, the resource is getting degraded.
19. Recreation and tourism are economic drivers for our communities.

Strategic Land Conservation

20. Fee title acquisitions and conservation easements should return as a focus for the SNC.
21. Long term management of any land conservation needs to be considered as a priority.
22. Land conservation protects many diverse landscapes and may provide recreational opportunities.

Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities

23. Human capacity is lacking region-wide. The SNC should provide funding and/or training to allow organizations to increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities and to build the capacity for sub-regional collaborative efforts to prioritize, plan, fund, and implement projects.
24. Physical infrastructure is lacking region-wide. Keep and maintain existing forest products infrastructure but also look for new opportunities to grow forest products infrastructure.
25. Strength in numbers – the SNC could play a lead role in convening partners and modeling collaborative efforts.
26. Recent funding opportunities offered by the SNC have excluded many Subregions from competing. There is a need to broaden the scope of grant programs to reach communities outside of Central Sierra Subregion.

Impactful Regional Identity

27. Know your audience – people will only listen to the message if they know it will directly affect them.

28. Appropriate techniques – message delivery needs to be as diverse as the audiences (social media, print, marketing, workshops, etc.).
29. Find the right partners and examples to highlight success stories of the Region.
30. Organizations in the Region need to work in concert with each other to achieve regional goals with each focused around their expertise

In addition, staff opened two public input sessions, inviting interested stakeholders and members of the public to comment on the development of Strategies (opened from 8/22/2018 through 9/20/2018) and the draft Strategic Plan (opened from 11/21/2018 through 12/20/2018). Input received was carefully considered and incorporated, as appropriate, into the Strategic Plan.

The list of commenters is provided below. Their specific comment letters and emails have been posted on the SNC's public website [here](#).

Comments on Strategy Development:

6/17/2018	Jim Phelan/Jim Maddox, Tuolumne County Sportsmen, Inc.
6/17/2018	Randy Morrison, Mule Deer Foundation
6/19/2018	Markley Bavinger, The Trust for Public Land
6/19/2018	Marty Coleman-Hunt, Sierra Cascade Land Trust Council
6/20/2018	Erin Tarr, Bear Yuba Land Trust
6/20/2018	Paul Mason, Pacific Forest Trust
6/20/2018	Members, Tuolumne County Natural Resources Committee
6/20/2018	Steve Frisch, Sierra Business Council
6/20/2018	Chad Hanson, Ph.D, John Muir Project

Comments on Draft Strategic Plan:

Pending completion of the public comment period, 9/19/2018.