

Background

SNC Board members have been briefed in the past relative to the Pacific Forest and Watersheds Land Stewardship Council (Council). Established in 2004, the Council is a private non-profit foundation with a staff of 15 professionals and a board of 18 members made up of representatives from: state and federal agencies, water districts, tribal and rural interests, forest and farm industry groups, conservation organizations, the California Public Utilities Commission, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

The Council was formed as part of a PG&E settlement agreement with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)—Final Order and Settlement Agreement, and the Stipulation Resolving Issues Regarding the Land Conservation Commitment (Stipulation). This agreement establishes that 140,000 acres of PG&E's watershed lands will be conserved in perpetuity for:

- outdoor recreation
- sustainable forestry
- agriculture
- natural resource protection
- open space preservation
- protection of historic and cultural resources.

In addition to overseeing the conservation of these watershed lands, the Council was directed by the CPUC to include the creation of a Youth Investment Program. This program will provide \$30 million in funding over ten years to programs that provide outdoor opportunities for underserved youth or enhance parks and recreation areas.

Under the terms of the agreement the Council is to cease to exist upon completion of its charge.

Current Status

The Council adopted the Land Conservation Plan Volumes I and II (LCP) at its meeting on November 28, 2007. The LCP provides the framework for the preservation and enhancement of the six beneficial public values described above. The Council is currently engaged in the process of determining the final disposition of more than 140,000 acres of PG&E's watershed lands. It is anticipated that some of the lands will be donated to eligible parties and other lands may continue to reside with PG&E. All lands will ultimately be protected by a conservation easement or some other legal instrument. The Council is currently considering options for four of the pieces of property.

Next Steps

During the past couple of years, staff has had general discussions with Stewardship Council Staff relative to a possible role for the SNC in the disposition of the PG&E lands. Those discussions have generally consisted of ensuring a common understanding of each organization's mission, responsibilities and strategic direction. It is clear that the missions of both organizations are in terms of long-term conservation of these lands. In that context, SNC staff has communicated that our strategic direction does not envision us as a land owning or managing entity, but that we are particularly interested in opportunities for research, demonstration and pilot projects on these lands and a willingness to consider a possible long-term role upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council.

Given the Council's progress in addressing land tenure issues, it appears appropriate to continue discussions with a goal of further defining an appropriate role for the SNC or determining that this is not the case.

Recommendation

It is recommended that staff be directed to continue to explore possible roles for the SNC to play in the implementation of the Stewardship Council's land conservation process. The Chair may wish to appoint a committee of the Board to provide guidance to staff on this matter. A recommended course of action will be brought to the Board at a future board meeting.

Stewardship Council Watersheds & Planning Units



- Planning Units
- Watersheds

EDAW

0 25 50 Miles

