

## **Background**

In September 2008 SNC staff was contacted about exploring options to partner with the National Geographic Foundation and other partners to initiate a Geotourism MapGuide project for the Sierra Nevada Region. The National Geographic Foundation has completed several of these guides in different regions of the world. The purpose of the guides is to identify and highlight unique locations within a region that appeal to visitors wishing to experience authentic local history and culture.

At the SNC December 2008 meeting, staff distributed information about Geotourism and informed the Board about the opportunity to participate in a Sierra Nevada project. Since that time a core team of partners has convened to further the effort.

SNC support for this project helps to achieve SNC program goals to increase tourism and recreation opportunities and supports enhancement of economic opportunities for the Region. It also supports goals in the SNC Education and Communication plan to strengthen a regional identity for the Sierra Nevada.

## **Current Status**

Staff has participated in several meetings to convene a core team of proponents for the Geotourism MapGuide effort. As of this meeting, core partners include the SNC, the National Geographic Foundation, the Sierra Business Council (SBC), The Sierra Arts, Culture and Heritage Community, and California State Parks. Strong support has also been indicated from the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service (USFS). One of the initial tasks of the core team will be to identify additional stakeholders, representative of the entire Region, to identify site nominations and other resources to sustain the project.

The scope of the effort is being developed and is subject to change based on financial support. As of now, the SNC has committed an initial amount of \$35,000 to leverage an equal amount granted to the SBC from the Morgan Family Foundation. The USFS is preparing a grant application to support the effort for up to \$250,000 from the National Scenic Byways Program. These funding levels will support the outreach needed to collect site nominations, development of the map, creation of a regional website hosted by National Geographic, and printing of up to 50,000 maps for free distribution throughout the region and key points throughout the State. A good example of a Geotourism MapGuide Web site can be viewed at [www.crownofthecontinent.net](http://www.crownofthecontinent.net).

## **Next Steps**

Development and publication of the MapGuide is expected to be completed within one-year. Staff will continue to keep the Board updated on progress of the project.