

Sierra Nevada Conservancy-Progress Report

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2008 (Proposition 84)**

Grantee Name: California Trout

Project title: Eastern Sierra IRWMP Launch Project

SNC Reference Number: SNC 070357 **Submittal Date:** September 9, 2010

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Check one:

6-Month Progress Report
 Final Report

<p>6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. Final Reports should reflect the entire grant period.</p>

- A. Progress Report Summary:** (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)

Work completed during the reporting period began by initiating a planning process that included broad engagement of relevant stakeholders and establishing a process for completing a Planning Grant application. As a result of the California budget crisis and resulting delays in the CA Department of Water Resources (DWR), along with subsequent requirements associated with Prop. 84, the efforts associated with the Conservancy grant ultimately centered on completing the Inyo-Mono Region Acceptance Process requirements. This was done successfully in the fall of 2008. Please see attached the Inyo-Mono Region Acceptance Process document.

- B. Deliverables or Outcomes completed during this Reporting Period or Milestones Achieved:** (Include specific information, such as public meetings held, agency participation, partnerships developed, or acres mapped, treated or restored.)

The Inyo-Mono IRWMP successfully completed the 2009 Region Acceptance Process (RAP). The application was submitted to DWR in April, 2009. Several Inyo-Mono IRWMP Planning Committee members attended the DWR RAP interview in Glendale in June, 2009, and we received the final region acceptance in fall, 2009. This process represented a culmination of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP's efforts to date, replacing the planning grant application as the original desired milestone of the pre-planning/launch phase of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP. In addition, an MOU was developed and accepted by participants of the Inyo-Mono

planning process. By the end of the grant period, there were approximately 25 signatories to the Inyo-Mono MOU with dozens more involved either formally or informally in the planning process. The Inyo-Mono IRWMP website was also launched during the grant period (inyomonowater.org). Supporting all efforts during the grant period was also the development and distribution of numerous outreach materials. Less tangible, although fundamental to the continued planning effort, has been the active participation of a plethora of relevant stakeholders, an illustration of the widespread commitment to the project itself.

In addition to convening numerous public Planning Committee meetings, during 2009, Inyo-Mono IRWMP staff arranged and attended numerous other community meetings throughout Mono County in order to reach out to additional water-related stakeholders and provide information about the IRWMP effort. Among others, staff attended meetings in Walker, Bridgeport, Lee Vining, June Lake, Crowley Lake, Chalfant, and Benton. In 2010, the Inyo-Mono IRWMP will continue its outreach efforts in both Mono and Inyo Counties, furthering the continued goal of engaging stakeholders throughout the planning region.

C. Challenges or Opportunities Encountered: (Please describe what has worked and what hasn't; include any solutions you initiated to resolve problems. If your project is not on schedule, please explain why here.)

One of the biggest challenges to date for the Inyo-Mono IRWMP has been the lack of funding available to support our process. The SNC grant freeze in late 2008 created the need for IRWMP staff to devote time to fundraising throughout 2009. We were able to continue operations on a small budget thanks to the generosity of several Planning Committee members and in particular, the support of California Trout.

Another ongoing challenge is simply managing and actively including all potential stakeholders from throughout our region. Because of the large size of our region (11% of the State), it has been difficult to visit many of the outlying or more rural communities and keep them informed of our activities and goals. We have also learned that email and the internet are not always the best communication tools in our expansive and largely rural region, where the internet is not available to all residents. Thus, our challenge is learning how to communicate with a diverse group of stakeholders and to ensure that accurate, timely information is being disseminated throughout the region. The political history has also been a challenge.

The greatest opportunity that has been realized is simply being able to establish and implement a project that strives to accept and include all involved and do so with each participating entity having an equal seat at the table. In turn, such a project has established an environment of collaboration and a sense of ownership by those involved.

D. Unanticipated Successes Achieved: (Please describe any additional successes beyond completing scheduled tasks or meeting scheduled milestones.)

After successfully completing the Region Acceptance Process, the Inyo-Mono Planning Committee formally decided to move into the planning phase, whereby the group could start writing the Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan and not continue to wait for planning grant funding availability. In conjunction with moving into a new phase, we revisited and started to revise our memorandum of understanding. Much progress was made on the new MOU in late 2009 and work will continue into 2010, with the goal of having member organizations begin to sign and adopt the MOU in the second half of 2010.

Most importantly, beyond addressing the initial scheduled tasks, was the continued engagement and solidification of cooperation of those entities involved in the project and the foundational realization of the importance of the project itself. As mentioned previously, this bottom-up organization has not only created a strong sense of ownership and responsibility among its members, but it has also provided a collective voice for rural communities, water agencies, and other stakeholders.

E. Compare Actual Costs to Budgeted Costs: (Please refer to your grant agreement to list your deliverables/budget categories and budgeted costs compared to actual costs incurred during this reporting period in the table below.)

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	Budgeted SNC Dollars	Actual Dollars
Project Director salary	\$13,500	\$14,376
Coordinating Committee expenses	\$ 1,000	\$0
Administrative Assistant salary	\$11,000	\$12,152
Meeting expenses	\$ 1,500	\$3,151
Consultants (facilitator/grant writer)	\$18,048	\$18,360
Administrative fees	\$ 4,515	\$1,623
GRAND TOTAL	\$49,663	\$49,662

Explanation: Due to the change in the Scope of Work, certain expenditures were either slightly higher or lower than anticipated. Specifically, meeting expenses exceeded projected needs primarily due to travel associated with attending Planning and Coordinating Committee meetings as well as attending relevant workshops in Sacramento and to Glendale to participate in the Region Acceptance Process interview.

F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project? (If so, please list the Performance Measures below and describe your progress.)

- Report the number of participants and different organizations represented at planning meetings.

Throughout the grant period, there were approximately 14 Planning Committee meetings involving a plethora of representatives from organizations throughout the planning region. Such participants include representatives from Federal, State, County, and city agencies as well as representation from tribal entities, water districts, conservation organizations and the general public. There are approximately 150 people on the Planning Committee email list, representing 75-80 organizations. About 25-30 entities regularly attend Planning Committee meetings. For a listing of agencies and organizations involved with the Launch Project, please refer to the Inyo-Mono IRWMP website (inyomonowater.org). In addition to Planning Committee meetings, approximately 8 Coordinating Committee meetings were convened. The Coordinating Committee is comprised of representatives from Inyo and Mono Counties, State and Federal resource agencies, tribal interests and conservation organizations.

- Number and types of planning actions deemed feasible by relevant stakeholders.

Per the approval of the Region Acceptance Process, the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group (RWMG) decided to directly pursue the drafting of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan. To do so will require a significant amount of planning subject to the DWR's final Guidelines. It is expected that numerous planning actions will be involved with drafting the Plan, including but not limited to: (1) continued outreach and engagement of regional stakeholders, (2) finalization of goals, objectives, and strategies of the Inyo-Mono RWMG, (3) development of priority project ranking criteria, (4) revision of existing MOU and (5) developing relevant project proposals. While it is expected to be challenging to address all of the tasks necessary to complete the Inyo-Mono Plan in time to meet first-time implementation funding opportunities, the Inyo-Mono RWMG believes it is feasible to do so.

- Amount of funds secured for implementation projects by April 2010.

The objective of the Launch Project was initially to develop a Planning Grant application. Due to unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances, the primary deliverable associated with the original grant was modified accordingly as noted above (Part A & B). As such, no implementation funds have been pursued as of April, 2010. However, approximately

\$50,000 has been contributed to the project in cash form and approximately another \$60,000 has been contributed as in-kind match.

G. Were there any other relevant materials produced under the terms of this Agreement that are not a part of the budgeted deliverables? If so, please attach copies. (Include digital photos, maps, media coverage of project, or other work products.)

Again, as described above, the endpoint of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP Launch Phase became the Region Acceptance Process after it was clear that planning grant funding would not be available. The RAP document is attached here and also includes a series of maps depicting various aspects of the Inyo-Mono IRWM region.

H. Next Steps: (Work anticipated in the next 6 months, including location and timing of any scheduled events related to the project.)

In 2010, it is expected that the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group will make significant headway on completing the Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan. This will entail many different activities and categories of work, from developing regional goals, priorities, and strategies to creating project ranking criteria and assessing water-related needs throughout the region. This process will necessarily mean additional outreach to communities and individual stakeholders, particularly in the more under-represented areas of our region (and disadvantaged communities). Part of the planning process will be finalizing a new, planning/implementation MOU and a consideration of the organizational structure/fiscal agent for the IRWMP group. Finally, we will undergo a visioning process in 2010 to develop mission and vision statements for the group.

Please Complete this Section for FINAL Report ONLY

Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders:

(What partnerships did you initiate or strengthen as a result of this project? How did they affect the project outcome? If applicable, how did this grant increase your organization's capacity? What is your plan to sustain this increase?)

Fundamental to the success of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Launch Project has been a focus on engaging interested stakeholders and creating a broad sense of collaboration and partnership. Funding for this project was instrumental in developing such a partnership. Indeed, during the grant period a burgeoning partnership has in fact been established with the formation (and continued growth) of the Inyo-Mono RWMG. Indirectly, the Launch Project has facilitated the establishment and/or growth of numerous small partnerships between participating entities and in doing so has contributed to the building of local capacity within the planning region itself. Moreover, bringing together experts from a wide array of organizations has facilitated greater communication and exchange of knowledge amongst many within the Inyo-Mono RWMG which in turn was instrumental in addressing the DWR's Region Acceptance Process requirements.

Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

Describe in one concise, well-written paragraph, the most significant accomplishment that resulted from this grant.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant allowed the Inyo-Mono IRWMP to launch its effort and build its capacity to develop an Integrated Regional Water Management Plan. Because Proposition 84 funding was delayed through the State, the Inyo-Mono IRWMP group decided to make the Region Acceptance Process the endpoint of the grant. Together with assistance from the Planning Committee, Inyo-Mono IRWMP staff gathered the necessary information and developed a strong RAP application that was unconditionally accepted by DWR in late 2009. This milestone represented the first big, tangible achievement of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP and also demonstrated that the group could make significant progress despite limited resources. A second important accomplishment has been the decision by the Inyo-Mono RWMG to base decision making on achieving consensus and in doing so, ensuring that all participating entities that signed the MOU have an equal voice throughout the planning process.

2. WOW Factor

If applicable, please describe anything that happened as a result of the project or during the project that is particularly impressive.

We are realizing the more intangible benefits of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP process in our region. The IRWMP has become a forum for increased communication among stakeholders who did not know each other before the IRWMP launched. Our monthly meetings have become a place for sharing information and resources and for asking questions. The group has also begun to realize the possibilities for the IRWMP to increase the region's profile in state water planning. Normally, the individual rural communities in our region feel that they cannot get their voices heard in Sacramento, but by speaking as part of a larger group that represents small communities, we can make a larger impact.

3. Design and Implementation

When considering the design and implementation of this project, what lessons did you learn that might help other grantees implement similar work?

Remain committed and focused on the project, accept and to the extent possible try exhaustively to address the concerns of ALL participating entities, maintain transparency and above all, respect everyone involved.

4. Indirect Impact

Please describe any indirect benefits of the project such as information that has been developed as a result of the project is being used by several other organizations to improve decision-making, or a conservation easement funded by this grant that encouraged other landowners in the area to have conservation easements on their property.

There have been indirect impacts associated with the project to date. Among them are a sense of need and ability to collaborate amongst many entities in the region and the ability of this project to help facilitate information, support project needs of partnering entities and an opportunity to leverage the expertise to help cooperating entities.

5. Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

If you worked in collaboration or cooperation with other organizations or institutions, describe those arrangements and their importance to the project. Also, describe if you encountered conflict in the project and how you dealt with it, or if there was conflict avoided as a result of the project.

With Project Staff leadership, the Inyo-Mono IRWMP project is one large and significant collaborative effort! Given the nature of the project, cooperation is fundamental to the success of the project itself. Indeed, given our decision making process relies on consensus being realized, without a concerted effort and commitment on the part of those participating to cooperate, the project simply would

not be where it is today. The level of cooperation, although not without challenges (see below), is both inspiring and is testimony to the value of the project itself. Dealing with internal conflict has primarily been through open dialogue and the desire on the part of the Group to stay away from contentious issues. For the most part, the willingness of members to successfully address conflict has resulted in relatively few issues not being able to be resolved.

6. Capacity-Building

SNC is interested in both the capacity of your organization, as well as local and regional capacity. Please describe the overall health of your organization including areas in need of assistance. SNC is interested in the strength and involvement of your board, significant changes to your staff, size and involvement of membership. In addition, describe how your project improved capabilities of partners, or the larger community.

I firmly believe that over time, the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group has done very well in establishing working relationships both having to do with the Inyo-Mono IRWM project as well as other projects resulting from a growing recognition of what others in the region are doing. Moreover, in the broader context, what has transpired as a result of the Inyo-Mono effort has resulted in a building of capacity amongst and within various participating entities. For example, during each Planning Committee meeting, we have various standing agenda items including an opportunity for individual to make announcements. These announcements have often resulted in the sharing of various ongoing projects, funding announcements, workshops, etc. Simply having such a large number of entities participating in the project and communicating with each other on a regular basis has (and continues to) facilitated much greater communication amongst many entities in the region and in this regard, has contributed to building local and regional capacity. Project Staff has not changed during the Conservancy grant period, which has provided for a sense of consistency and continuity, both considered positive attributes of the project.

7. Challenges

Did the project face internal or external challenges? How were they addressed? Describe each challenge and any actions that you took to address it. Was there something that SNC did or could have done to assist you? Did you have to change any of your key objectives in response to conditions “on the ground”?

Given the breadth and intent of this project, it is only to be expected that several challenges will arise. Indeed, they have, although with determination and a sense that this project is worth pursuing, the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group has done well to successfully address most challenges. Below are the most significant of challenges either Project Staff of the Group have had to deal with during the Conservancy grant period. They broadly fall under three main themes:

1. Political: There is a long history of suspicion and controversy having to do with water issues in the eastern Sierra. Moreover, there is a history of conflict among the environmental community, water districts (particularly LADWP) and county governments. What is being attempted in the Inyo-Mono RWMG is to essentially bring together an array of entities that have either worked against one another (in the press, in the courts or otherwise) or have simply not worked with one another in the past to achieve a common goal of addressing basic water needs. Overcoming the history, conflict and a sense of suspicion necessary to achieve our goal has indeed been challenging and continues to remain a challenge today. Having said that, over time we have been able to stay focused on issues that are germane to the project while avoiding those that have been a source of past conflict or suspicion. Additionally, we have continued our outreach to the public with the goal of simply informing people about the project, project goals and the strategies we are employing to address them. In doing so, we have always been willing to answer questions. Lastly, we have strived to maintain an open door policy and conduct ourselves in a manner that is transparent and honest.
2. Financing: The grant provided by the Conservancy was instrumental in helping the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group complete the Region Acceptance Process. However, additional funds have been required in order to support Project Staff, conduct continued outreach efforts, attend relevant meetings inside and outside the region and cover basic expenses associated with maintaining project momentum. Additionally, the original intent of the Conservancy grant was to complete a Planning Grant application necessary to secure funding for drafting the Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan. Unfortunately, the national, state and local economies all took a turn for the worse during the grant cycle, which contributed to delays in DWR's planning efforts (delaying the release of the Planning Grant funding cycle) and a reluctance of local organizations involved being able to financially contribute to the project's funding needs. Related to some degree to the lack of "internal" funding has been a reluctance to support a project so focused initially on planning and a lack of assurance that a contribution will result in a tangible outcome. And, with difficult financial times, funding opportunities from foundations, federal and state agencies was constrained, while at the same time, there was increased competition for these limited funding sources. To address the funding challenge, CalTrout has remained very committed to supporting the project and has contributed significantly in order to do so. Moreover, there has been a significant amount of in-kind contributions from those involved to help move the project forward.
3. Institutional: As noted above, there is a long and acrimonious history in the region having to do with water. Institutions in the region, be they local counties, water districts, environmental organizations or otherwise still have issues (sources of conflict and mistrust) that remain today or that have left a sense of anger/mistrust which in turn influences the ability and desire to work

together as productively as possible on the Inyo-Mono IRWMP Project. I believe the Group has done well to establish a foundational relationship and a desire to work together for the betterment of the project. Institutional challenges have also existed with respect to the Dept. of Water Resources (DWR). More specifically, the lack of funding-not the fault of DWR- to adequately support the State-wide IRWMP Program (resulting in the delay of guidelines, and associated funding opportunities) has been a challenge as has been, to a lesser degree, the internal turnover of DWR IRWMP staffing. Staying focused on the Inyo-Mono needs, realizing the need to rely on those actively involved with the Inyo-Mono project, and a sense of commitment on the part of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP Staff has been essential in keeping the larger project on track.

8. Photographs

Grantees are strongly encouraged to submit photos, slides or digital images whenever possible. These images will be used for SNC publications such as annual reports or on the website. Please make sure you clearly identify location, activity, and your project with each submitted image. Images will be credited to the submitting organization, unless specified otherwise.

Please see attached a few photographs of the Project to date.

9. Post Grant Plans

What are the post-grant plans for the project if it does not conclude with the grant? Include a description of the following (if applicable): (1) Changes in operations or scope; (2) Replication or use of findings; (3) Names of other organizations you expect to involve; (4) Plans to support the project financially, and; (5) Communication plans?

The Inyo-Mono IRWMP Project is one that is expected to have a long-term future. Completion and approval of the Region Acceptance Process (RAP) is but one step in reaching several goals associated with the larger project. Indeed, what is provided in the RAP document is foundational information that the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group will be using to help complete a Planning Grant application, Implementation Grant application, as well as the completion of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP Plan itself. At the completion of the current Conservancy grant, there is not expected to be any operational changes. Over time, the Inyo-Mono Project is expected to involve an array of existing and new organizations, too numerous to state here (however, please refer to the inyomonowater.org website for a relatively current list of those involved in the Project). Fundamental to the continued engagement of current and new organizations remains a conscious effort on the part of the Inyo-Mono IRWMP staff to conduct outreach via a portfolio of communication strategies including direct outreach meetings, the Project website, written communications to local media outlets, radio interviews, and presentations to the respective Boards of

Supervisors. Continued financial support for the project remains a challenge with various proposals being written and funding support from involved parties being sought and secured.

10. Post Grant Contact

Who can be contacted a few years from now to follow up on the project? Please provide name and contact information.

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SNC-approved Performance Measures: (Please list each Performance Measure for your Project, as identified in your Grant Agreement, and the results/outcomes.)

See above and Section F.