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: **SEQUOIA RIVERLANDS TRUST**

Project title: **SOUTHERN SIERRA IRWMP LAUNCH**

SNC Reference Number: **SNC070364** **Submittal Date: _1-31-2011_____**

Report Preparer: _____May Stevens_____ **Phone#:___738-0211_____**

Check one:

_____ 6-Month Progress Report
___X__ Final Report

6-Month Progress Reports should reflect the previous six months. **Final Reports** should reflect the entire grant period.

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

In Spring 2008, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy awarded an IRWMP launch grant to the Southern Sierra region, which includes the portions of Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kern counties from approximately the 600 foot elevation to the Sierra crest. The launch grant provided funding to convene stakeholder groups, determine regional boundaries, develop a regional MOU, and prepare an application for the next round of IRWM Planning funding. The Sequoia Riverlands Trust was selected as the fiscal agent for this regional effort.

Implementation of the SSIRWMP launch started in May, 2008. The goals were to select regional boundaries, develop a Memorandum of Understanding for the regional stakeholders, select a grant writer and prepare the IRWMP grant application, which was expected to be due in February, 2009.

Despite state funding delays, the SSIRWMP launch project met its benchmarks regarding outreach to stakeholders, formation of Planning and Coordinating and other committees, selection of a grant writer, delineation of regional boundaries and development of a MOU between the regional stakeholders as well as preparing an IRWMP grant application to the Department of Water Resources. In addition, the project consultants held several brainstorming and planning meetings to discuss the functions the IRWM Plan would play in the region and the topics that should be covered in the IRWMP. This was to help determine the priorities and the scope of work for the DWR IRWMP application.

The task of actually writing the IRWMP grant was halted by the Prop 84 funding freeze. This also caused a delay in the expected due date of the IRWMP grant applications, which did not occur until mid- 2010. Because of these two factors, the SSIRWMP project extended the SNC grant deadline. However, it should be noted that the SSIRWMP group did not want to stop its activities for nine months or longer and wait for the grant guidelines to come out before reconvening, fearing that this delay would threaten the momentum already developed. Instead it decided seek funding to initiate 'Phase II' of the IRWMP planning process. This phase would expand the launch grant process to include actual work on the SSIRWMP. This initial planning work will help assure a successful DWR IRWMP grant application, will allow us to make the best of the DWR funding obtained and will strengthen stakeholder relationships essential for meeting the SSIRWMP goals and objectives. An application requesting this funding was created by the volunteer efforts of the Grant Writer and submitted to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy in February, 2009. Despite frozen Proposition 84 funds, work on the existing grant (and the requested Phase I planning grant) continued. The Planning Committee also approved seeking funding from a number of other sources to support the planning phase of the project. With Sequoia Riverlands Trust acting as the fiscal agent, the SSIRWMP sent a formal application to the National Forest Foundation for funding under the Collaboration Support Program in December, 2009 and spring, 2010, to conduct stakeholder group meetings and begin the formal planning process, The SSIRWMP group also sent a letter of inquiry to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to establish a partnership to support the project and sought funding for planning. The SSIRWMP area is called out the in the NFWF business plan.

The effort culminated in December, 2010 after submitting the planning grant proposal to DWR. Unfortunately, no funding was awarded to the group for planning. Representatives from key stakeholder groups and Sierra Nevada Conservancy met with representatives from DWR and gained some information about the refusal to fund the group. The group will be strategizing in 2011 to determine the next steps and for attempting to complete a second application for planning funds.

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.)

<u>Specific accomplishments to date include the following:</u>

1. Formation of Planning and Coordinating Committees:
    - Outreach to over 100 organizations regarding participation in planning committee to make final decisions on critical elements of the IRWMP process.

- Held 20 Planning Committee meetings with attendance of 8 to 35 stakeholders and stakeholder groups.
- Formation of a Coordinating Committee with 10 members to assist with implementation of the planning process.
- Utilized the stakeholder Planning Committee meetings to work on identifying existing relevant plans, studies and potential future plans, studies and projects to enhance the water management portfolio of the region.
- Began documenting match from the Planning and Coordinating Committees to be included in the match requirements for the DWR Planning Grant application.
- Completed a stakeholder survey documenting all the needs of the region
- Compiled a region information document

2. Coordinated meadow restoration projects on the Sierra, Sequoia and Inyo National Forests

3. Selection of project staff: Project manager, grant writer and facilitator selected and contracts executed. Paid a stakeholder group from Kern County (Desert and Mountain RC&D) to travel to meetings.

4. Delineation of Regional Boundaries
   - Regional Boundary discussions held with 9 neighboring entities.
   - Agreement and letters of agreement on regional boundaries for east, west, north and south neighbors.
   - Per RAP recommendations constructed and approved Memoranda of Understanding with Kern County Water Agency/IRWMP and Madera County IRWMP.

5. Development of Governance and MOU
   - Completion of final draft governance and MOU for planning phase of project.
   - MOU signed by 13 stakeholders and stakeholder groups. Three of these signatories form the Regional Authority or the Southern Sierra Regional Water Management Group: The Sequoia Riverlands Trust, the Sierra RCD and the Springville Public Utilities District. This is a requirement for IRWMP formation in the California Water Code.

6. Outline of plan objectives and a table of contents for the plan
   - Five brainstorming sessions held to identify integrated water management concerns
   - Completion of draft IRWMP Table of Contents, regional issues, goals, objectives and strategies.

7. Constructed a website as a portal of IRWMP information

- The website is located at: http://www.sequoiariverlands.org/learn-irwmp.html

8. Coordinated with Provost and Pritchard Consulting Group to scope the planning document writing.

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.)

The greatest challenge in the project was continuing work on the planning project without knowledge of the end of the fiscal crisis and the bond freeze. The grant writer was not paid for over a year on one invoice and the freeze compromised her ability to work on the project. Despite this the grant writer contributed greatly during the freeze.

It was of great challenge that Madera, Central Sierra and Kern County IRWMP efforts requested boundary changes during the weeks immediately preceding the Region Acceptance Process deadline. Madera and Kern did this after already agreeing to boundaries and they requested the change without much stakeholder outreach in the new areas. The Central Sierra effort was late getting online and passed this late approach and associated confusion on to the SSIRWMP.

Another great challenge has been to maintain stakeholder interest and engagement during the freeze and while DWR continually pushes the release of key IRWMP documents such as: RAP guidelines, IRWMP standards and the Planning Grant RFP.

The response of the Regional Water Management Group has been to hold fast and maintain momentum in the face of these challenges with the spirits of volunteerism and commitment to regional and local natural resource sustainability. The freeze and associated challenges with DWR deadlines became an opportunity to analyze closely the challenges this disadvantaged region has and to formulate regional goals, objectives and strategies to resolve issues and sustainably manage natural resources.

Another great challenge was the continual denial for planning funds for the project despite repeated attempts and proposals.

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

SSIRWMP project management team was pleasantly surprised at the spirit of volunteerism and regional identity that emerged during the bond freeze. The freeze actually cemented the relationships in the Planning Committee and enabled additional time to reach out to other stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

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
		0
		0
		0
GRAND TOTAL	**49,000**	**375,000.00**

Explanation: (if needed)
The table above includes in kind services and donations from the Planning Committee and includes $2,000 in private donations, $100,000 of project management, grant writing and coordination, food, agency personnel such as CA DFG, US Forest Service, Provost and Pritchard Consulting Group,

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.)

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.)

Yes, including maps, region information, planning documents, etc. See attached.

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

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?)

This grant initially dramatically increased the Sequoia Riverlands and Sierra Nevada Alliance to initiate planning for the southern Sierra Nevada Region. However, after the funding freeze, the group's capacity was very strained. The net result of this effort was greater communication among state, federal and local governments, sharing information and consensus decision making. This process was a powerfully uniting for the region and servers to increase collaboration, trust and planning outcomes.

Key partnerships included the work with tribes, local governments, federal agencies, landowners and non-profits all coordinated by Sequoia Riverlands Trust.

The plan to sustain the leadership, collaboration, information sharing and planning activities is to attempt to gain planning funds from the second round of DWR planning grants. Future implementation grants are a real challenge, however, because there are no groups with funding to hire consultants or to hire staff to complete reports to qualify for grants or prepare implementation grant proposals, which appear to require 40-100 hours to prepare and may be up to 900 pages in length.

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 greatest accomplishment was the collaboration among the diverse stakeholder groups that resulted in the IRWMP grant application.

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

   The group continued under the grant freeze despite no funding. This work increased and galvanized the bonds among stakeholders and served to provide inspiration to the group as a whole and individual stakeholders struggling without funding.

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?

   Consider other funding sources and getting an advance on the initial work to avoid delays in payments.

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.

   The project has substantial indirect impacts such as greater coordination and collaboration in the region as well as many new relationships. The SSIRWMP identified and documented the needs of small non-profits and water purveyors as well as entities such as resource conservation districts. The group also worked with downstream user groups on issues and planning prospects as well as regional boundaries.

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.

The group was very collaborative and there were few conflicts. Those that are worth mentioning especially revolved around the selection of fiscal agent. It appears that two stakeholder groups in particular were resentful that they were not selected as fiscal agents in the process. Effective, clear and timely communication and documentation of meetings served to demonstrate that these two groups did not have substantial concerns and were in fact resentful that they were not selected for fiscal agency. Other stakeholder groups were also instrumental in decreasing conflicts by adding pressure to collaborate in uncooperative groups. The consensus-based decision making and the governance structure and MOU were also very important.

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.

The southern Sierra has very limited capacity for regional collaboration planning and implementation. Without the SNC grant, this planning effort would not have occurred. Non-profit board participation, agency involvement and volunteerism are key for the success in this region. No single group has the capacity, in terms of staff or financial resources to execute regional planning and implementation without substantial support of partners and funders. This project served to improve communication, collaboration and support for this work and resulted in a network of watershed-based groups and efforts that now communicate.

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”?

The group mostly had external challenges relating to a lack of funding. However, there were and continue to be substantial internal capacity challenges in the region.

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.

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) Replicaton or use of findings; (3) Names of other organizations you expect to involve; (4) Plans to support the project financially, and; (5) Communication plans?

See above.

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.

Soapy Mullholland, 559-738-0211, soapy@sequoiariverlands.org

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

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Project Reporting Guidelines

Progress Reports are required periodically throughout the term of the Grant Agreement (Refer to Exhibit B of the Grant Agreement). These reports will allow you and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to see the degree to which the project is on track and achieving your projected outcomes. Your Progress Reports will further provide the SNC with information that will help us to explain your work to the Board Members and various other audiences. Timing of Progress Reports is specified in the Project Schedule included in Exhibit A of the Grant Agreement, but generally every 6 months until completion of the project.

A Progress Reporting Form is provided to Grantees on the SNC Website. **Six-month Progress Reports** should reflect the previous 6-month period; **Final Reports** should address each question for the entire grant period – looking at the project as a whole.

The form specifies the items you will need to report on. For the Six-Month Interim Report these include, but are not limited to: *A Progress Report Summary of work completed, Deliverables or Outcomes Completed, Challenges or Opportunities Encountered, Unanticipated Successes Achieved, Actual Costs compared to Budgeted Costs, Any Additional Relevant Materials Produced, and Next Steps.*

The Final Report will include additional information, such as**:** *Resources Leveraged, Capacity-Building Results and Collaboration and Cooperation with Stakeholders, a Description of Project Accomplishments, and SNC Approved Performance Measures.*

Please make sure that you submit complete reports by the dates requested in your Grant Agreement.