

**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: THE SIERRA FUND**

**Project title: YUBA RIVER WILDLIFE AND RECREATION AREA:  
CONSERVATION AND ACQUISITION PROGRAM PHASE 1**

**SNC Reference Number: SNC 070012                      Submittal Date: 03/08/2010**

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**Check one:**

**6-Month Progress Report**  
 **Final Report**

<p><b>6-Month Progress Reports</b> should reflect the previous six months. <b>Final Reports</b> should reflect the entire grant period.</p>
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**A. Progress Report Summary:** (Please provide a general description of work completed during this reporting period.)  
The work completed during this period includes completing all work specified in the grant agreement including property appraisals, developing partnerships, completion of environmental assessments, outreach materials, Yuba River CAPP and maps.

**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.)  
Our intention was to develop a very strong partnership with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) who is extremely experienced in developing and completing land deals in this area, and we achieved this goal. We coordinated our efforts with TPL in terms of meeting with the landowners, site visits and identifying future funding sources and partners to complete the purchase on these two properties. We agreed that TPL should be the applicant on several grant applications asking for purchase funds for the properties. TSF supplied much of the detail and background needed for the grant applications. Joint approaches to funders were made to:

- Ca Dept of Fish and Game (WCB funding)
- Ca Dept of State Parks (tax credit funding)

- Caltrans (EEMP funds)
- Resources Agency (Prop 84 funding)
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy (Competitive Grant funding)
- Yuba County Water Agency (IRWMP and other funding)

We also held informational meetings with representatives from:

- South Yuba River Citizens League
- Friends of Deer Creek
- Sierra Buttes Land Trust
- University of California
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Yuba County Board of Supervisors

Other Deliverables Completed:

- Appraisals (previously submitted)
- Environmental Assessments (previously submitted)
- Outreach materials (see attached)
- Maps (previously submitted)
- Conceptual Area Preservation Plan (see attached)

We're happy to report that TPL signed an option agreement in July 2009 with the owners of the Excelsior (formerly Robinson-Klein) property to acquire 745 acres of the property (595 acres in fee simple; 150 acres in conservation easement; see attached map) for a \$4 million purchase price. This value has been confirmed by the appraiser, who provided us an initial valuation of \$4.02 million and has preparing the new full narrative report. DGS is reviewing the resubmitted appraisal. The agreement will require TPL to exercise the option by May 31, 2010 and close escrow by June 30, 2010.

In addition, TPL also has an option to acquire the 8.23 acre parcel that is an unlabeled inholding within the conservation easement parcel (again, please reference the attached map). This parcel has been valued at \$75,000, and TPL would need to raise additional funding to acquire it.

Additional funding of \$350,000 for the Excelsior project was received from CalTrans EEMP funds in June 2009 and the Wildlife Conservation Board is extremely excited about the property and we are awaiting news about potential funding from them. Unfortunately the funding application to the SNC had to be withdrawn due to the change of scope of the proposal (it no longer being a full acquisition, but partly a conservation easement.) We hope that budget problems will soon be solved and that the SNC will soon be able to accept a grant application again for this project. Meanwhile, we are optimistic that the other

funding sources will cover the costs needed to close the deal in June. In addition, TPL is continuing discussions with University of California officials about a management role on the Excelsior property or conveying it to them subject to an interagency agreement with DFG.

The Blue Point property has taken a less high priority place in our work. However, there is a funding proposal submitted to the SNC and conversations continue with other funders including WCB and potential managers like DFG and the University of California. Once the Excelsior project has been settled, then we will turn our attention back to Blue Point.

For the Rice's Crossing property, we received a \$1,000,000 grant from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and we are also happy to report that we helped TPL write a submission to Caltrans that resulted in a \$350,000 grant from EEMP funds in June 2009. There is a large River Parkway grant outstanding on this property from 2008 and it is hoped that if this proposal is successful, that a combination of WCB monies and possibly Yuba County Water Agency, will seal the deal with the landowners and TPL.

**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.)

Obviously the State budget freeze has had an effect on this project in terms of finding additional purchase funding and our ability to keep landowners interested in the project. Expectations were that additional rounds of SNC and other grant funding and Wildlife Conservation Board funding would have been available by this time and it has been a disappointment to all, that this has not been the case. Unfortunately, due to delays in funding, the Blue Point property fell out of contract and we have not attempted to renegotiate the contract while state budget restrictions are still in question. However, the landowners have indicated that the property can be back under option as soon as necessary. Our approach is to complete the Excelsior project and then to refocus on Blue Point. There is a pending funding proposal for the Blue Point property currently with the SNC.

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

See attached story from the San Francisco Chronicle. This was an unanticipated piece of public outreach!

**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.)

<b>PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>Budgeted SNC Dollars</b>	<b>Actual Dollars</b>
A: Project Mgmt, Communications	\$6,550	\$6,300.07
B: Appraisals	\$15,000	\$15,000
C: Environmental Assessments	\$10,000	\$7,750
D: Project Partnerships	\$2,800	\$2,800
E: Communications & Mapping	\$4,000	\$2,501
F: Funding & Development Ptnrs	\$2,400	\$2,400
G: Public Outreach & Communication	\$2,000	\$2,000
H: Overhead	\$2,250	\$2,250
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$45,000</b>	<b>\$41,001.07</b>

**Explanation:** (if needed)

**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.)

No performance measures were listed with this contract agreement

**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.)

See SF Chronicle story (attached)

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

As stated above, much depends upon the State's budget and funding plans for this type of project. We will go on working with TPL to secure grant funding and hope to complete the Excelsior purchase in 2010. The Blue Point purchase is still very much desired and will be reactivated as soon as funding certainty is resolved. The landowners are very much on board with the project still and everything is poised to recommence activity if and when the time is right.

Funding is still being sought for all projects with an application pending for Blue Point still with the SNC and a proposal with the Resources Agency for Rice's Crossing.

Talks continue with the WCB, DFG and the University of CA concerning the funding and management of the Excelsior project and Blue Point and with YCWA for Rice's Crossing.

## **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?)

We developed a very strong relationship with TPL, where we both worked on grant applications, approaches to landowners, funders and other partners. The relationship worked very well, with our local knowledge and contacts complementing their expertise in the field of land acquisition. This is a very useful partnership for us at the Sierra Fund and will hopefully lead to future collaboration on land conservation projects. It was also very useful to develop lasting contacts at other agencies with interests in land conservation in the area including the Wildlife Conservation Board and UC California and Yuba County Water Agency.

### **Description of Project Accomplishments:**

#### **1. Most Significant Accomplishment**

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

Our most significant accomplishment was establishing a partnership with TPL which really focuses this national organization on the conservation of important lands along the Yuba, with the crowning achievement of proceeding so far along the path of permanent protection for the Excelsior property.

#### **2. WOW Factor**

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

Within a few months, the SNC will be able to say that they were an important partner in helping preserve approximately 2 miles of critical salmon and steelhead spawning grounds along the lower Yuba River. (The Excelsior Property)

### **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?

Perhaps the most important lesson was understanding that collaboration is a goal unto itself and should be built into many other proposals and that collaboration with organizations that have already have expert knowledge (like TPL) can help avoid duplication of effort and more than double the effectiveness of a project.

### **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.

It's clear that the landowners from Excelsior and Blue Point and Rice's Crossing all communicate, and that the success with Excelsior, even with the state budget crisis has encouraged the other landowners to remain engaged in the process and stay in agreement with TPL. We believe that the progress with the Excelsior Project has been key to their continued interest in conservation rather than development of their properties.

### **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.

As stated above, our intention throughout this project was to form an extremely strong working relationship with the Trust for Public Land. Interesting TPL in these properties (and more in this area) was essential for the project to succeed as they had the knowledge and expertise to forge the land deals and to attract more funding. This collaboration has been very successful, with constant communication happening and joint meetings and field trips with potential funding and management agencies.

## **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 Yuba River acquisition project has relied on a variety of partners to achieve our progress. Working closely with Trust for Public Land, Yuba County Water Agency, Fish & Game and other agencies has helped the project to understand and overcome obstacles to success. This project has also helped build the capacity of The Sierra Fund to manage large acquisition projects, especially in areas that have been compromised by gold mining activities. The Sierra Fund has attracted attention from a number of important new partners and donors as a result of our activities in this project, including being asked to serve as the fiscal sponsor of a trail building project on Deer Creek.

## **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 main challenge the project faced was in the realm of finding funding for land acquisition and this was obviously worsened by the state budget freeze. Various funding proposals are still "in limbo" from 2008.

## **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.

See attached

## **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 Trust for Public Land will continue leadership of this project with volunteer work being carried out if necessary by the Sierra Fund's contract manager for the project, Janet Cohen. This will entail meeting with landowners and agencies, with whom she has built up relationships over the course of the project and potentially helping with TPL funding submissions.

**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.

The Sierra Fund  
Elizabeth Martin, CEO  
432 Broad Street,  
Nevada City, CA 95959  
lizzy.martin@sierrafund.org  
530.265.8454 X12

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

No approved Performance Measure were listed in our Grant Agreement (this agreement was made in your "first round" and before Performance Measures were built in to agreements. However, please see list of Deliverables attained during the course of this contract)

YubaRiverCAPP\_Oct09.doc plus Appendices

**Figure 1** – YRW CAPP Overview Map - Figure 1\_YRW\_overview.pdf

**Figure 2** – YRW CAPP Ownership Map - Figure 2\_YRW\_ownership.pdf

**Appendix A** – Priority Parcel List – Appendix A\_YRW\_priority parcels.doc

**Appendix B** – Priority Parcel Maps – Appendix B\_YRW\_priority parcel maps.doc

**Appendix C** – Yuba County Parcel owner table (APN, Owner, address, acreage) – Appendix

C\_YRW\_Yuba Co Parcel Data.xls

**Appendix D** – Nevada County Parcel owner table (APN, Owner, address, acreage) – Appendix

D\_YRW\_Nevada Co Parcel Data.xls

**Appendix E** – Yuba River CAPP Photographs – Appendix E\_YRW CAPP photos.doc