

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 TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

Project title: SIERRA CREST WORKING FOREST
CONSERVATION EASEMENT PHASE III

SNC Reference Number: SNC 368

Submittal Date: 03/02/2012

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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.)

During this reporting period The Trust for Public Land (TPL), working in coordination with the Truckee Donner Land Trust (TDLT), purchased conservation easements over approximately 2,720 acres of Sierra County forest land and conveyed them into permanent stewardship with TDLT. They will be monitored against a formal baseline report, also written and signed within the reporting period, and alongside other conservation easements over approximately 4,365 acres of additional forest land owned and managed by SPI. Altogether, TDLT stewards conservation easements over approximately 7,085 acres of checkerboard land on either side of the Sierra Crest in the vicinity of historic Henness Pass.

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.)

- Baseline report completed
- Monitoring protocol established
- Easement terms finalized
- Easements formally acquired and conveyed to TDLT for permanent stewardship

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.)

Reaching final consensus on precise easement language amongst three funders, the landowner and the future permanent steward of the easements was complex and time consuming. Patience and good communication on all sides were key to a successful outcome.

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

The successful completion of our work conserving over 7,000 acres of SPI forest land along the Sierra Crest has opened up an opportunity to work with SPI on an even more visible endeavor to permanently protect over 6,400 acres of contiguous working forest in the Martis Valley and Lake Tahoe Basin.

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
Fees & Acquisition Costs	\$540k	\$540k
GRAND TOTAL	\$540k	\$540k

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.)

“Resources leveraged in the Sierra Nevada” – With respect to Phase III of the Sierra Crest Working Forest Conservation Easement Program, SNC dollars were leveraged nearly 5.5:1. With respect to the program as a whole (over all three phases), SNC dollars were leveraged at the even higher rate of 20.8:1. What’s more, these ratios only consider the outright cost of acquisition, and do not factor in the additional in-kind and out-of-pocket expenses required to develop the project over time (for

instance staff time, appraisal costs, costs related to the development of the baseline documentation, etc.).

“Acres of Land Conserved” – Phase III directly conserved approximately 2,720 acres of land. Phases I-III conserved a grand total of approximately 7,085 acres of SPI-owned forest land. However, it is important to note that these lands are “checkerboard lands,” that is to say land held in 1 square mile blocks adjacent along corners. The intervening squares of land in this area are mostly owned and managed by the United States Forest Service and are reasonably safe from land use conversion and development. Also with the help of SNC funding, TPL and TDLT are currently in the final steps of acquiring the 3,000-acre Webber Lake property, directly in the middle of the Conservation easement lands. Once this acquisition is complete, the net effect of the Sierra Crest WFCE Program and the Webber Lake acquisition taken together will be the permanent protection of approximately 45 square miles of contiguous forest habitat, free from further development and conversion from forest use, along a critical corridor of the northern Sierra Nevada’s crest.

“Number of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities” – The Sierra County General Plan (1996) addresses the need to protect open space, forest resources, agriculture, and tourism. The Sierra County General Plan makes the protection of the County’s scenic and economic assets such as forests and meadows a specific goal. The protection of the Sierra Crest III sections through a conservation easement will meet these goals by protecting the property from scattered, low density, rural residential development, which would diminish the scenic qualities of the property as a wilderness area, damage the property’s recreational value by barring or complicating public access, and decrease the economic viability of commercial timber production in this area.

The Sierra Crest Conservation Easement Project, and this final phase, seeks to permanently protect productive timberland that is threatened by rural residential development. If these larger timber ownerships were to be broken up and sold to individual owners, it would affect the economies of scale and make it unlikely that the new landowner could afford to continue commercial timber management on the property. All of the Sierra Crest lands feed timber into SPI’s Quincy Mills. Just recently, SPI has started to receive new orders for lumber and re-opened its small mill. In addition, the Loyalton Biomass Plant in Quincy, which generates electricity from carbon neutral wood bi-products, is now running. As detailed in the previous section of this application, the Sierra Crest III parcels have provided over 5,500 mbf of sustainably harvested timber to local mills over the last 10 years. Protection of these lands through conservation easements will help to ensure a continued timber supply to the mills and will contribute modestly to the stability of the traditional timber-based local economy.

The Sierra Crest III sections currently provide significant recreational opportunities to visitors in this area including access to the north shore of Lake of the Woods, the southern shore of which is developed with a U.S. Forest Service campground that is

regularly used by the Boy Scouts of America. Additionally, two of the Sierra Crest III parcels are adjacent to the 3,000 acre Webber Lake/Lacey Meadows property also under acquisition by the Land Trust and TPL. One of these two parcels is in Coppins Meadow, between Jackson Meadows Road and Webber Lake, and is in effect a “gateway property” to the lake. It is rare to have permanent and defined public access to privately owned parcels, but the conservation easement on these Sierra Crest parcels will do just that: permanently grant the right to the public to use the property for hiking, hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, skiing and snowmobiling. Not only will this protect and potentially bolster the local recreational economy, the easement will also provide these recreational values at a reduced cost to the public, given that land management costs will still be the responsibility of the private landowner.

Outdoor recreation and tourism is a large component of the Sierra County economy. Visitors bring revenue into the local economy by paying for lodging, dining in local restaurants, shopping at local retailers, and recreational fees. The Jackson Meadows area is a very popular recreation destination. Estimates show that there are nearly 40,000 people staying in the local campgrounds annually and almost 25,000 people snowmobiling on these lands each winter. We have conservatively estimated that these visitors bring just over \$2.6 million per year to the local economy through campground fees, fuel purchases, food purchases, and tours through the local snowmobiling outfitters. Many visitors who come to recreate in the Jackson Meadows area are likely to stay in lodgings in Truckee, Sierraville or one of the other surrounding unincorporated communities.

Residential development of the Sierra Crest lands would threaten this thriving local tourist economy by restricting public access to the properties along Jackson Meadows road and around Webber Lake and so diminishing the enjoyment of hiking, fishing and snowmobiling. With more homes in the area, the number of conflicts between residents and outdoor enthusiasts will increase and could possibly end the entire winter season if the road is plowed to provide all season access to residents. While the amount of development allowed under current zoning is low density, it will still have a significant impact on the wilderness experience, and will degrade the open scenic vistas now enjoyed from hiking trails, camping grounds, and from the lake.

One of the key public benefits of the proposed conservation easement is that it would prevent any development on the Sierra Crest III sections. Current General Plan designations and zoning support the estimate that at least three new home sites could be developed on the Sierra Crest III lands. Potentially, all the SPI lands along FS07/Jackson Meadows Road could be sold to private parties who could build up to at least another eight homes along this rural two-season access road. Given that access will mostly be from the Sierra County side of the lake along Jackson Meadows Road, off of Highway 89, the majority of the impacts of residential construction will be in Sierra County.

According to the Sierra County Planning Department, the protection of the Sierra Crest III sections through a conservation easement will meet County goals by

avoiding conflicts with resource uses by protecting the property from scattered, rural residential development which would diminish the scenic qualities of the property, conflict with the property's recreational value by barring or complicating public access, decrease the economic viability of commercial timber production in this area, and increase the costs to the County of providing required services.

While it is difficult to measure the net fiscal and economic impacts of new residential development in this particular location, interviews with local planners suggest that in addition to the potential reduction in tourist dollars, and the resulting revenue loss to the local economy, three public services will be significantly affected: fire prevention; policing; parking and road maintenance.

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.)

A baseline report and monitoring protocol were developed. They involve very large files and can be provided to SNC staff separately via an FTP service.

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

We will erect signage on the property (duly acknowledging SNC's support and participation) as the weather permits this spring.

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 allowed us to close the final phase of a very large scale conservation easement acquisition program and strengthened our already very strong working relationships with both the Truckee Donner Land Trust and Sierra Pacific Industries.

Through the process of finalizing our grant agreement and the conservation easement deed, we were also able to forge closer working relationships with staff members at the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and to innovate strategies for dealing with common but complex problems (such as emerge from the fact that TPL is often a grantee but never the permanent steward of the land we acquire using SNC funds). The practical lessons learned in the course of developing this project have already been of use in resolving similar issues on another past project (the Cold Stream acquisition).

Description of Project Accomplishments:

1. Most Significant Accomplishment

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

During this reporting period The Trust for Public Land (TPL), working in coordination with the Truckee Donner Land Trust (TDLT), purchased conservation easements over approximately 2,720 acres of Sierra County forest land and conveyed them into permanent stewardship with TDLT. They will be monitored against a formal baseline report, also written and signed within the reporting period, and alongside other conservation easements over approximately 4,365 acres of additional forest land owned and managed by SPI. Altogether, TDLT stewards conservation easements over approximately 7,085 acres of checkerboard land on either side of the Sierra Crest in the vicinity of historic Henness Pass.

2. WOW Factor

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

It is important to note that these lands are “checkerboard lands,” that is to say land held in 1 square mile blocks adjacent along corners. The intervening squares of land in this area are mostly owned and managed by the United States Forest Service and are reasonably safe from land use conversion and development. Also with the help of SNC funding, TPL and TDLT are currently in the final steps of acquiring the 3,000-acre Webber Lake property, directly in the middle of the Conservation easement lands. Once this acquisition is complete, the net effect of the Sierra Crest WFCE Program and the Webber Lake acquisition taken together will be the permanent protection of approximately 45 square miles of contiguous forest habitat, free from further development and conversion from forest use, along a critical corridor of the northern Sierra Nevada’s crest.

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?

Reaching final consensus on precise easement language amongst three funders, the landowner and the future permanent steward of the easements was complex and time consuming. Patience and good communication on all sides were key to a successful outcome.

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.

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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.

Through the process of finalizing our grant agreement and the conservation easement deed, we were also able to forge closer working relationships with staff members at the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and to innovate strategies for dealing with common but complex problems (such as emerge from the fact that TPL is often a grantee but never the permanent steward of the land we acquire using SNC funds). The practical lessons learned in the course of developing this project have already been of use in resolving similar issues on another past project (the Cold Stream acquisition).

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.

We will all need to help each other over the coming years to cope with, and ultimately overcome, the decline in our traditional funding sources. TPL is a founding member of the Northern Sierra Partnership (NSP) an effort on the part of five international, national and local organizations to raise the profile of the Northern Sierra region and to multiply the resources at its disposal to achieve a shared vision for the region's future. The Sierra Crest project has been a marquee initiative for the NSP and provides us with a solid base to build on as we reenergize and prepare to tackle the next phase of our capital campaign.

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”?

As an easement project protecting jobs and forest recreation opportunities in an area loved by many, we faced no significant opposition or public criticism.

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.

A wide variety of photographs are available as part of the baseline report, available to SNC staff under separate cover.

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 project is completed. We will erect the signage this spring and TDLT will continue to monitor the easements on an annual basis into the indefinite future.

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 best contact from here on out is the Truckee Donner Land Trust. The telephone number of the land trust is 530-582-4711. John Svahn is currently the stewardship director at the land trust. His email is john@tdlandtrust.org.

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

See the response to “F. Do you have information to report on the project-specific Performance Measures for your project?” in the main body of the report, above.

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.