

### **Background**

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) Staff has been planning and developing outreach and communications tools and activities to gain support for the watershed, forest health and community sustainability work being conducted by SNC and our partners throughout the Region.

At its March 2013 meeting, the SNC Board directed staff to take appropriate actions to increase awareness about the importance of the Sierra Nevada Region to the State's health and well-being with the goal of achieving the following outcomes:

- Retaining existing levels of Sierra and SNC funding in the 2014 water bond;
- Applying revenue generated by greenhouse gas cap-and-trade auction program to forest sector projects in the Sierra;
- Ensuring that upper watershed projects in the Sierra Nevada are considered appropriately in the Department of Water Resources Integrated Regional Water Management Program;
- Improving water quality and public health by addressing legacy mining issues in Sierra watersheds; and,
- Obtaining funding for upper watershed water quality/supply/reliability work from Delta efforts in recognition of the importance of the Sierra as a major water source for the Delta.

### **Current Status**

Following Board direction, staff is developing materials and creating opportunities to communicate the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to all of California.

SNC published the "Investing in California's Watershed: Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Proposition 84 Grant Program" report (Report) which highlights the success of the grant program and the achievements of our grantees, and demonstrates that investment in the Region's watersheds benefits water supply and reliability for all Californians. The Report makes the case for future investment in the Sierra and confirms the role the SNC can play when new funding vehicles such as water bond funding or cap-and-trade auction revenue become available.

Staff will utilize the release of the Report as an opportunity to conduct outreach activities including delivering the report to various Legislators, presenting the report to Boards of Supervisors in all 22 counties of the Region, and publishing an educational [interactive map](#) on the SNC Web site. The new online tool allows users to explore the relationship between Sierra Nevada watersheds, use of the water, and the investments made by the SNC to protect and improve the Region.

Staff continues to meet with legislators and key staff, with recent meetings occurring with Senator Monning's Legislative Director, Senator Hill's Legislative Director; Assembly Member Bigelow and Senator Berryhill. We have also made progress

towards scheduling one or two Regional tours including one with Assembly Member Dahle, Assembly Member Gordon, and others to tour Nevada County.

SNC provided comments to California Air Resources Board (ARB) on the Draft Cap-and-Trade Auction Proceeds Investment Plan ([Attachment A](#)). We encouraged the ARB to make substantial investment in the forest sector to achieve Greenhouse Gas emission reductions goals and create benefits of value to the State by urging the ARB to consider the following additions to the first three-year investment plan:

1. Add SNC to the list of State Agencies to provide oversight, develop program criteria, and distribute funds through our existing Healthy Forests Grant Program.
2. Invest approximately \$10 million in funding early phase development and deployment of community-scale forest bioenergy technologies that the SNC would administer through our grant program.
3. Provide a direct transportation incentive to woody biomass fuel providers who need to transport biomass outside a 20 mile circle to get to an existing bioenergy facility.
4. Allow a portion of cap-and-trade revenue to be spent on public federal forest land treatments to achieve critical air quality and renewable energy benefits.
5. Fund forest conservation easements through Wildlife Conservation Board, the SNC and other state conservancies, Cal FIRE and other entities with existing programs in place to begin achieving long-term carbon storage, emission reduction, climate change adaptation, water reliability, and local economic benefits.
6. Use the rural Community Focus Group to refine the definition of a Disadvantaged Community so it does not exclude rural forested communities.

### **Next Steps**

Next steps will include continued meetings with key decision-makers with the goal of obtaining investment for the important watershed, forest health and community sustainability work needed in the Sierra Nevada Region. We will continue to engage partners and sister agencies by identifying and creating opportunities to communicate the need for and benefits of continued investment in Region. We will host additional tours that get Legislators and their staff into the Region to visit SNC and partner projects that highlight the importance of forest and watershed health and highlight the value of these investments to the state. And, we will continue to update the SNC Web site and develop new materials such as the SNC Annual Report to communicate the link between Sierra watersheds and water users.

### **Recommendation**

**This is an informational item only; no formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although Boardmembers are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.**