

Background

In September 2011, the Board adopted a new Strategic Plan, which establishes objectives for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) within five areas of focus and lays out the strategies the organization will employ in meeting those objectives. The five areas of focus are:

- Healthy Forests
- Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands
- Watershed Protection and Restoration
- Promotion of Sustainable Tourism and Recreation
- Long-term Effectiveness of the SNC

Meeting Plan objectives requires the organization to take a number of specific actions each year in support of the strategies included in the Plan. These actions are included in an annual Action Plan. In March 2012, the Board approved the first Action Plan to implement the new Strategic Plan. This 2012-13 Action Plan covers the period from March 2012 through June 2013, while subsequent Action Plans will be twelve months and will align with the State fiscal year—from July through June.

Current Status

As shown in the End-of-Year Report on the 2012-13 Action Plan (Attachment A), staff has successfully implemented most of the actions included in the 2012-13 Action Plan. In some cases, however, planned actions will continue into next year as noted, generally because the action is underway, but not yet completed or is ongoing in nature.

Overall, the End-of-Year report reflects significant achievement on the part of the SNC in 2012-13 on a number of efforts important to the Region. Highlights of the accomplishments for each project or initiative are listed below. It should be noted, however, that the SNC did not make significant progress on two projects, which are not included here: The Mount Whitney Fish Hatchery Project and the Stewardship Council Project. In both cases, progress was slowed due to the needs and constraints of our partners on the projects.

- Grant Program
 - All Fiscal Year 2007-08 and 2008-09 grant projects were closed or extended (18 projects were extended for various reasons beyond the control of the grantee).
 - Fifty (50) grants, worth \$7 million, were awarded and executed under the 2011-12 Healthy Forests Grant Program
 - Twenty-nine (29) grants, worth \$5.1 million, were awarded and executed under the 2012-13 Preservation of Ranches and Agricultural Lands Grant Program

- Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)
 - The SNC continued to support a number of local collaborative efforts through a variety of mechanisms, including funding of facilitation, technical assistance and other services, and SNC Staff time.
 - SNC Staff engaged the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council and the Forest Service in the completion of a draft Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration Implementation Plan.
 - The SNC began implementing its responsibilities in the 2012 California Bioenergy Action Plan by providing several communities with technical assistance and help to secure funding to design and construct community-scaled forest bioenergy facilities. In addition, SNC worked with key state agencies including the Public Utilities Commission, California Energy Commission and CalFIRE to ensure that energy policies and procedures will support the development of community scale Bioenergy facilities.
 - The SNC began providing staff and other support to the US Forest Service in the development of a conservation strategy for the Pacific Fisher in the southern Sierra Nevada, a species which is up for listing as an endangered species in 2014 and is at the center of much of the controversy around forest management in the southern Sierra Nevada.

- Regional Water
 - Staff coordinated efforts with the Department of Water Resources and others to draft the Mountain Counties Overlay Regional Report for the California Water Plan Update 2013. A public review draft of the document should be available in June, 2013.
 - The SNC met with key regional, statewide and national partners, developed outreach and communications materials and updated the SNC website to advance understanding of the Sierra-Delta connection and identify the Sierra as the primary source of California's water. (Also see related accomplishments under "Education and Communications".)

- Regional Agriculture and Ranching
 - Twenty-nine projects were awarded \$5.1 million in grant funds by the SNC Board at their March 2013 meeting. Types of projects included Ranch and Farm Infrastructure Development, Conservation Easement Acquisitions, Invasive Species Removal, Stream Restoration and Meadow Restoration. Two of the projects will bring together diverse interests to address forest service grazing allotments in Alpine and Tuolumne Counties.

- Geotourism
 - The SNC organized and facilitated the distribution of 100,000 printed MapGuides within and outside the Region. These MapGuides have helped to direct more than 1.5 million visitors to the Geotourism website.
 - The SNC completed procurement of, and made available for free download, mobile phone applications for iPhone and Droid Smartphone users,

- connecting them to information about 1,500 destinations highlighted on the Geotourism website while traveling in the Region.
 - The SNC provided funding for and implemented a marketing plan aimed at increasing the amount of web traffic visiting the site on a monthly basis.
- Ecosystem Services
 - The SNC coordinated the completion of Phase 1 of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis, which analyzes how upper watershed restoration treatments, primarily fuel hazard reduction and forest health management, will benefit downstream beneficiaries and reduce operational costs of energy and water delivery agencies.
 - The SNC funded the Sagehen water yield study, which began in 2012 -13 and will continue through 2014–15. Pre-forest treatment monitoring data has been collected in this fiscal year and post-treatment data will be collected the next two years with the final report expected in the winter of 2015.
 - The meadow hydrology assessment by the University of Nevada, Reno, is nearing completion, with its draft report and an assessment of subsequent work underway.
- Education and Communications
 - A field tour for legislative staff was held in December, 2012, which focused on the impact catastrophic fires can have on the watershed, as well as, the benefits accrued from investing in healthy forest projects to reduce negative impacts to water quality, air quality, and habitat.
 - Staff held meetings with seven freshmen legislators in February, 2013 and staff, Boardmembers and allies met with fifteen veteran legislators/staff and two additional freshman legislators in conjunction with the March Board meeting.
 - Staff developed key messages, supporting print materials and associated web pages to advance understanding of the Sierra-Delta connection, identify the Sierra as the primary source of California's water, explain forest and Bioenergy benefits, strengthen the link between healthy forests and communities, and begin discussions about the need to remediate legacy mining impacts.
 - A Proposition 84 Investment Report was developed to inform policy makers and the public about the investment that has occurred through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy's Proposition 84 Grant Program.
 - The SNC initiated collaboration with the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to create a Sierra Nevada Fire Season Summary Report to tell the story of the 2012 fire season, with the goal of quantifying and communicating the effects of catastrophic fire. Unfortunately data availability proved to be a significant barrier, and the SNC is now working to ensure that key data are available for the 2013 fire season.

- Sierra Nevada System Indicators
 - Staff completed and the Board approved the third and fourth System Indicator reports: Water and Air Quality and Climate (September 2012) and Forest Health and Carbon Storage (December 2012).
- The Great Sierra River Cleanup
 - More than 3,400 volunteers joined together to remove over 63,000 pounds of trash and recyclables from waterways throughout the Sierra Nevada.
- Funding Development
 - Staff began targeted outreach with key audiences related to two primary funding goals: inclusion in the 2014 water bond and access to Cap and Trade Auction Revenue disbursements for forest sector projects in the Sierra.
 - The SNC provided grant writing assistance for several projects we are involved with under the SNFCI/Bioenergy Initiative.
- Internal Operations
 - The SNC has developed and implemented its training plan and training request procedures that together will identify training needs and track staff training assignment and completion.
 - Staff have implemented and improved intranet-based services and content to improve effectiveness and efficiency of internal processes and communications.
 - SNC IT staff have completed implementation of IT system improvements, have further developed IT disaster recovery procedures and have completed SNC's IT security risk assessment.

Next Steps

Work related to all of these efforts will continue into 2013-14 as reflected under Agenda Item XII. The draft 2013-14 Action Plan includes new actions, as well as, actions carried over from 2012-13, which were begun, but have not yet been completed.

Recommendation

This is an informational item only. No formal action is needed by the Board at this time, although board members are encouraged to share their thoughts and comments.