

Background

Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff continue work to increase awareness of the Sierra Nevada Region's important role in the State by engaging in activities that support the Action Plan focus areas approved by the Board in June, 2014.

In the past year, the SNC has significantly increased interaction with policy makers with a focus on legislators and legislative staff. Much of this activity focused on discussions related to the Water Bond. We have also increased our use of traditional and social media to highlight key issues in the Region and to showcase successes in implementing our Proposition 84 grant program, the release of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis and the State of Sierra Nevada's Forests report.

Current Status

Water Bond:

On November 4th California passed Proposition 1 - Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 - which authorizes the sale of \$7.5 billion in general obligation bonds and provides the SNC with a \$25 million allocation. SNC staff will be discussing next steps relating to SNC funding in the bond in a separate agenda item.

State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests Report:

SNC staff released the State of the Sierra Nevada's Forests report (Report) on September 22nd. To generate interest in the Report, a press release was sent to 260+ media contacts as well as to multiple SNC email lists. In addition, staff sent a modified version of the press release as an email to a huge number of stakeholders and partners, posted links to the Report on social media sites including Facebook and Twitter, and highlighted the Report on the SNC website. Staff has been receiving positive feedback from partners and the Report has received coverage in multiple news outlets and partner publications. Executive Officer, Jim Branham, provided a briefing on the Report and SNC's plans to address the issues raised to the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) at their recent Board meeting. Many rural counties are adopting resolutions expressing concerns over the dire conditions of many Sierra forests.

In an effort to keep attention on the Report and to facilitate sharing the important messages within the Report, staff created a map journal which is available on the SNC website, and a power point presentation which can be used by partners and others. Additionally, near the end of October, staff shared recently released US Forest Service (USFS) fire and soil burn severity maps from the King fire via the Sierra Wildfire Wire blog. These maps provided staff with an opportunity to emphasize the continued upward trajectory of the regional fire severity trends identified in the Report, and highlight the potential long term impacts resulting from severe fire events. Staff will continue to share the Report with partners, through our social media accounts, and with the news media as opportunities arise.

Cap and Trade Auction Revenue:

SNC staff are actively working with other state departments that have received Cap and Trade Auction Revenue for activities consistent with the SNC's mission and strategic plan, including CalFire, California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Strategic Growth Council.

SNC staff is also participating in the Forest Carbon Action Team's efforts to develop a statewide plan that will identify actions that can enhance the role that the state's forests can play in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The plan to be developed will be important in guiding further investment of Cap and Trade Auction Revenue in the forest sector and will identify key policies considerations affecting our ability to maintain our forests ability to store carbon.

We are likewise coordinating with the Sierra Business Council and other partners in the formation of the Sierra Climate & Adaptation Partnership (Sierra CAMP). While SNC's role is yet to be defined, we are exploring future opportunities for communication, education, and outreach to increase understanding of the consequences of climate change in the Sierra Nevada and the relevance of those impacts to the State; and improving the Region's access to funding.

Meetings and legislative actions:

Following the September, 2014 Board meeting, SNC staff, with the assistance of Secretary Laird, met with Assemblymembers Rich Gordon (D-Menlo Park) and Mark Stone (D-Monterey Bay) to discuss the needs of the Sierra Nevada Region and to solicit their support in upcoming issues before the legislature. These members recognize the importance of the Sierra Nevada to the health and well-being of the State and have agreed to work closely with the SNC and our partners on key Sierra issues.

Additionally, staff have had meetings with staff in Assemblymember Mike Gatto's (D-Los Angeles) office and the Governor's office to discuss the State of the Sierra Nevada's Report and needed next steps.

Current Sierra Nevada Research:

SNC is tracking research relevant to the Sierra Nevada. Summaries of how the three new research papers identified below may impact the Region and links to the original articles are provided in Attachment A:

- Mountain runoff vulnerability to increased evapotranspiration with vegetation expansion;
- Sustainable biochar to mitigate global climate change; and,
- Trends in Wildfire Severity: 1984 to 2010 in the Sierra Nevada, Modoc Plateau, and Southern Cascades, California, USA.

Regional Tour:

The King Fire unfortunately provides yet another opportunity to educate policy-makers on the consequences of failing to adequately address our forest conditions. SNC staff worked with the Eldorado National Forest, USFS Region 5, El Dorado County Supervisor Briggs and a number of key partners to put together a legislative staff tour of the King Fire on November 19th. The purpose of the tour is to expose legislative staff to the aftermath and implications of a large, intense significant fire. The field trip focused on the impacts on water quality and supply, GHG and pollutant emissions, energy production, habitat, wood products and biomass and recreation. A verbal update will be provided by staff at this Board meeting.

FY 2013-14 Annual Report:

The 2013-14 Annual Report was approved for completion and distribution at the September Board meeting and the final Report was distributed to the legislature, administration and the public in November. Hard copies of the Report will be distributed to SNC Boardmembers at this meeting.

Next Steps

The development of Regional and watershed level action plans to address watershed health in the Sierra Nevada will be a primary focus of the SNC's outreach efforts going forward. Staff will be actively tracking, and participating in, legislative and administrative activities that provide opportunities for addressing key issues.

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.