

Background

Each year the Board approves an annual Action Plan that outlines the specific activities the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) will undertake during the upcoming fiscal year in support of the strategies in the SNC's Strategic Plan. The Board adopted the 2014-15 Action Plan at the June 2014 meeting. At that same meeting, the Board directed staff to re-focus and increase efforts related to healthy forests in recognition of the dire conditions in many of the forests in the Sierra Nevada and the urgent need for action. Per that direction, staff have developed the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Action Plan for review and approval by the Board (see Agenda Item XI).

Current Status

Based on staff's analysis of anticipated workload related to increased efforts under SNFCI, it does not appear as if significant changes to the approved 2014-15 Action Plan are needed at this time. Staff will continue to evaluate needs and will make any adjustments needed to ensure that this effort remain the organization's top priority. The following two additional actions under SNFCI have been added to reflect the additional efforts being undertaken in response to the Board's direction:

- Developing a SNFCI Action Plan to guide the SNC's efforts in addressing the dire state of many forests in the Sierra Nevada. The plan will include actions to address regional issues and to facilitate collaborative processes for the identification of needs and priorities at the local level.
- Launching an effort to develop a Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) in collaboration with other State, federal and local government entities, nonprofit and community organizations, and tribes. The purpose of the plan will be to address policy issues and coordinate investment in the Sierra Nevada to reduce risks to the many benefits the Region provides.

In addition, staff have re-evaluated actions related to other projects and initiatives in the 2014-15 Action Plan in light of the additional effort that will be required to develop the SNFCI Action Plan and the Sierra Nevada WIP, as well as any other new developments since the Plan was approved by the Board in June 2014. This has led to modifications to actions under several initiatives. In addition to some more minor revisions, these include:

- Noting completion of the awarding of funds under the 2013-14 Healthy Forests and Abandoned Mine Lands Grant Program. (This assumes the Board awards remaining funds to projects as recommended by staff under Agenda Item XII).
- Adding the development of guidelines, including the holding of public workshops and submission to the California Natural Resources Agency, for the 2015-16 Proposition 1 Grant round.
- Deleting an action related to developing and implementing a funding program to promote biomass utilization using Cap and Trade Auction Revenues since the SNC will not be receiving funding from this source in the current year.

- Putting additional emphasis under the Education and Communications Initiative on the dire condition of many of our forests and the significant risk to the Region's role in storing carbon, providing water and other benefits to Californians.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to implement the 2014-15 Action Plan during the remainder of this fiscal year. And as indicated above, will consider additional changes to the Plan if needed to accommodate any unanticipated workloads associated with the development of the SNFCI Action Plan and Sierra Nevada WIP. Staff will report any such changes to the Board at future meetings.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board approve the revisions to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2014-15 Action Plan after reviewing and providing any modifications and/or comments.