

2013-14

Action Plan Accomplishments



SIERRA NEVADA
CONSERVANCY

May 2014

Table of Contents

Grant Program.....	4
Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI).....	4
Biomass Utilization	5
Abandoned Mine Lands	5
Regional Agriculture and Ranching	6
Regional Tourism and Recreation.....	6
Ecosystem Services	7
Education and Communications	7
Great Sierra River Cleanup.....	8
Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council).....	8
Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery.....	8
Sierra Nevada System Indicators.....	9
Internal Operations	10

The following represent accomplishments under each of the major initiatives and projects undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) in accordance with the 2013-14 Action Plan approved by the SNC Governing Board in June 2013. Accomplishments are tied to the individual actions that the SNC had planned to undertake in the 2013-14 fiscal year under each project or initiative.

Grant Program

Action Planned: Implement the 2013-14 Proposition 84 grant round including reaching out to stakeholders and responding to inquiries to the request for proposal, project identification, evaluation and approval, agreement development and project implementation.

What was accomplished:

- Released Grant Guidelines and Grant Application Packet for the 2013-14 Grant Round.
- Scheduled to approve projects totaling \$2.0 million by the June 2014 Board meeting with an anticipated \$700,000 to be approved by the Board in September.

Action Planned: Close out 35 current grant projects.

What was accomplished:

- Closed out 23 grant projects and extended 12 grant projects.

Action Planned: Provide timely and accurate response to any bond reporting and audit requests received and update the California Strategic Growth Plan Bond Accountability website and the State Conservation Easement Database as required in Executive Order S-02-07.

What was accomplished:

- Responded to ten Department of Finance (DOF) Grantee Audits; currently awaiting draft findings.
- Responded to all bond reports and cash flow drills using the Agency Bond Consolidated reporting System (ABCRS).
- Continued to update the Bond Accountability website.

Action Planned: In the event new funding comes forward, plan efforts will be undertaken to implement a new grant round during this fiscal year.

What was accomplished:

- \$1 million was returned from a previously awarded grant project, which was reallocated to the Rim Fire Restoration focus area; anticipate Board approval of specific grant awards during 2014-15.

Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI)

Action Planned: Provide funding for projects that meet SNC criteria for healthy forests in the 2013-14 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- Approximately \$1.2 million in grant awards for projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve forest health was approved by the Board in March and \$183,975 in grants will be brought to the Board for approval at the June Board meeting. Additional projects will be brought to the Board in 2014-15.

Action Planned: Continue to support local collaborative efforts to develop projects consistent with SNFCI objectives. In the case of collaboratives initiated or heavily supported by the SNC, this will include building in measures to ensure long-term sustainability of the group as SNC's support lessens.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC continued its involvement in a number of successful local collaborative efforts, including but not limited to the following:
 - The SNC provided funding and coordination of two Rim Fire technical restoration workshops designed to provide scientifically based input to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the development of post-fire activities. This recovery effort is unprecedented in its scale and level of destruction, and the workshops were critical in assisting the USFS in moving expeditiously in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, while ensuring adequate input from those concerned about the condensed planning and comment periods.
 - The Sierra National Forest was given the annual Region 5 Regional Forester's Honor Awards for the Whiskey Ridge Ecological Restoration Project. Collaborative process guidance and facilitation was provided by SNC Staff and was an outgrowth of the Sustainable Forests and Communities Collaborative (SFCC), a collaborative in eastern Madera and Fresno Counties.
 - Through transitional funding and partnerships the SFCC no longer relies on the SNC for facilitation and is functioning as fully independent group. The SNC has transitioned the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG) into more independent member facilitation through a similar approach.

Action Planned: Work with the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council), the USFS, Tribal Entities, other state agencies, and key stakeholders in embracing opportunities and reducing barriers to increased ecological restoration in forested areas, with a focus on strong collaboration and improving the local economies and social well-being.

What was accomplished:

- After a series of in-depth discussions with the Coordinating Council, USFS and other partners, the following focus areas were identified as high priority

areas with the most potential for increasing pace and scale of forest restoration:

- Increase the use of fire on the landscape as a forest management tool and restoration method;
 - Encourage landscape level treatments/landscape size and scale processes;
 - Creation of new and protection of existing infrastructure to process more wood, including biomass, in a way that keeps benefit in local communities;
 - Identify and implement contracting tools to maximize local economic and social benefits from restoration activities; and
 - Explore the potential of advances in technology to allow mechanical treatments on steep slopes currently not available for mechanical treatment. (Work in this focus area has been well underway for over a year, including field trips with critical USFS staff to see some of these treatments firsthand.)
- Each area has been assigned a team including Coordinating Council members and one USFS staff. The USFS Region 5 leadership has made a firm commitment to providing the staff required to make real progress on these issues, and is also meeting with the Coordinating Council's Policy Workgroup on a quarterly basis to ensure this work continues to move forward at a high priority level.

Action Planned: Work with the Coordinating Council and the USFS to develop the Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration Implementation Plan, as well as continuing to identify and implement ideas, actions and opportunities to increase the pace and scale of ecological restoration on our forests.

What was accomplished:

- As the Coordinating Council and USFS teams move forward in the five focus areas described above, they will be playing a critical role on a regional, state and local level, affecting policy and capacity. These actions effectively step down the Region 5 FS leadership Intent into specific actions, one of the key long-term projects of the Coordinating Council.

Action Planned: Provide facilitation and participation in the Southern Sierra Fisher Conservation Strategy development effort.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff serve on its Core Support Team, as well as the Inter-Agency Leadership Team for this effort. SNC is leading public outreach and involvement, including crafting key communication messages and hosting the first of two public meetings to keep interested stakeholders engaged and informed. This effort will conclude by December 2014, with the finalization and rollout of the Conservation Strategy and Decision Support System.

Action Planned: Participate in various efforts to promote policy changes and investment in support of SNFCI objectives, including but not limited to the Biomass Working Group, Sierra Cascade Dialogue (SCD) and the US Forest Plan Revision process.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff continues to serve on the SCD's Steering Committee.
- Information collected from the SCD sessions was used to inform the "need for change" document for Forest Plan Revision, whose contents are important for the national forests within the SNC Region. SNC also provided significant support to establish remote broadcast of SCD sessions to the eastern Sierra, allowing for more eastside residents to participate.
- See Biomass Utilization item below for more information regarding accomplishments related to the Biomass Working Group.

Biomass Utilization

The SNC was identified in the California 2012 Bioenergy Action Plan as the primary state agency responsible for pursuing funding for forest bioenergy research and implementation and to assist communities with the development of community-scaled projects. To fulfill these goals and responsibilities, the SNC had planned to complete the following actions under this initiative by June 2014:

Action Planned: Provide funding for projects that meet SNC criteria for healthy forests in the 2013-14 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- SNC awarded several grants to support the planning of forest bioenergy projects.

Action Planned: Continue to provide technical assistance and funding support, as well as identify additional funding sources, for projects in various stages of development within the Region. Under the Bioenergy Action Plan, the SNC will provide a limited level of assistance to projects outside the Region.

What was accomplished:

- SNC is tracking and in some cases providing direct support to about 10 bioenergy projects that are in the planning stages. The project located in North Fork (Madera County) is the furthest along in planning and therefore has served as a primary demonstration project to pave the way for others to follow. SNC is providing direct support to the project to develop a 10-year stewardship contract that can help guarantee a consistent supply of biomass for the facility. In addition, SNC is establishing relationships with private investors to encourage them to invest in bioenergy projects. A financial roundtable was convened in May 2014 to present opportunities to representatives from the private sector and help project proponents to better understand how to develop projects to better attract private investment.

Action Planned: Continue to work with other agencies (such as the USFS, CalFIRE, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and the California Energy Commission) to help craft policies and programs to assist forest biomass infrastructure.

What was accomplished:

- SNC and CalFIRE co-sponsored three workshops involving diverse stakeholders to develop a white paper defining the byproduct of sustainable forest management, as directed in SB 1122 (Stats. 2012, Chpt. 612). This white paper outlines a process to define sustainable forest management, and outlines a verification and monitoring process to ensure the majority of forest feedstock used in bioenergy facilities is a by-product of sustainable forest management. This paper has been submitted to CPUC.

Action Planned: Continue to provide outreach to help educate policy makers and the public on the issues associated with woody biomass utilization.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff have made presentations at conferences, workshops, and during field tours to help diverse interests better understand the importance of local woody biomass utilization to help reduce open biomass pile burning and the associated air pollution, as well as the local economic development opportunities of developing value added biomass products and bioenergy.

Action Planned: Help to compile information and tools to help diverse interests resolve issues and concerns.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff led a seven (7) month process to negotiate an agreement on the North Fork bioenergy project among the project proponents, County Board of Supervisors and planning staff, and the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD). CBD appealed the project in July 2013 based on about seven (7) issues of concern. SNC, with support from partners and consultants, addressed each issue by providing further data, technical knowledge and developing trusting relationships. CBD chose to not pursue legal action and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document has been adopted and initial project permits have been issued.

Abandoned Mine Lands (AML)

The SNC had planned to complete the following actions under this initiative by June 2014:

Action Planned: Work with partners to develop projects that will meet the funding criteria in the 2013-14 grant round.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff and partners have developed five (5) projects that have been invited to submit full project proposals for a total potential award amount of \$722,000 by the close of the 2013-14 grant round. Two of the five (5) are site improvement projects that are developing CEQA documentation during the project development process. One Category I grant award in the amount of \$75,000 for the City of Jackson's Oro de Amador Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Project will come to the Board for approval in June.

Action Planned: Continue to work with the California Natural Resources Agency, other State agencies and partners to determine how best to address due diligence issues associated with the potential for AML to exist on properties that may be acquired using State funds.

What was accomplished:

- After initiating the collective discussion of the need for a consistent due diligence process with the California Natural Resources Agency and other agencies that may be affected, the Department of Conservation took the lead on developing a mechanism for the identification of chemical or physical hazards from AML's on properties that may be acquired using public funds. SNC Staff have continued to monitor the status of the new tool.

Action Planned: Assessing existing programs working to address AML issues and seeking opportunities to leverage these efforts on behalf of the Sierra; investigating the potential for new collaborative efforts; and, encouraging inclusion of Tribal Ecological Knowledge and Traditional Resource and Environmental Management Systems.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff continued to participate in the California Abandoned Mine Lands Agency Group (CAMLAG). CAMLAG initially formed to provide a platform for AML information sharing among state and federal agencies dealing with safety and health threats, regulatory requirements, and individual remediation efforts. Over the past year, the discussion and actions of the group have shifted to include a more comprehensive and collaborative approach among agencies tackling the AML issue. A new Charter was approved by the group members and SNC Staff actively participated in assisting with a new cross-agency AML priority ranking system which will enhance agency cooperation and resource pooling for project remediation in the future. The priority ranking system is scheduled for completion by the end of 2014.
- SNC Staff continued to participate in the Delta Tributaries Mercury Council (DTMC) where participating groups are exploring new methods and efforts of remediation and introducing new scientific research on the impacts of mercury in the environment. Networking within the DTMC produced a grant opportunity within the 2013-14 AML focus area grant round.

Action Planned: Exploring the availability of federal, state, and private funding sources and considering SNC's capacity to provide assistance to local governments and others in securing funds.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff has become more aware of the types of funding resources that are available for AML remediation work. Although no outside funds were targeted and secured for a project under this action item during the term of the 2013-14 Action Plan, SNC Staff will continue to explore opportunities through various sources including CAMLAG.

Action Planned: Sponsor and/or partnering in AML symposia and other events.

What was accomplished:

- SNC sponsored an event conducted by The Sierra Fund: Mercury and Human Health – Informational Summit and Strategy Meeting. The summit brought together doctors, health officials, and medical practitioners in the Region to provide information about current research on mercury in fish and provide an opportunity to evaluate and have input on current outreach efforts to communities within the Region. The event was open to the public and held in Sacramento in order to provide legislators the opportunity to attend.

Action Planned: Build on the continuing efforts of The Sierra Fund to educate policy makers and the public about the importance of remediation work to the reliability and sustainability of the State’s water supply.

What was accomplished:

- SNC partnered with The Sierra Fund to conduct a legislative tour focusing on AML issues in December 2013. Legislative Staff were introduced to the impacts of legacy AML at Rollins Reservoir where contaminated sediment from upstream AML have severely impacted reservoir capacity; Empire Mine State Park where an innovative system to remediate arsenic contamination in water and soils has been implemented; and Malakoff State Historic Park where The Sierra Fund with funding assistance through the SNC grant program is working to find a solution to mercury entering Humbug Creek from the old hydraulic pit.
- SNC Staff participated in the planning and provided testimony for a special hearing of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources in March-- Mercury Contamination: Toxic Legacy of the Gold Rush. Multiple speakers from diverse perspectives, including Tribal, State and Federal agencies, academia, and non-profit organizations, presented information on mercury transport from AML into waterways and fish and the impact of eating mercury contaminated fish.

Regional Agriculture and Ranching

Action Planned: Increase agritourism on the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide (SNGT) website and companion materials as a way of marketing these opportunities on behalf of farmers and ranchers in the Region.

What was accomplished:

- Since the beginning of the fiscal year, 62 additional agritourism assets have been added to the Geotourism website. By the end of 2013-14, we will have all of the farmers markets on the Geotourism website as well as some additional farmstay opportunities, totalling 20-25 additional nominations. Work on this will continue into 2014-15 as we launch an even broader effort to better market agritoursim in the Region as part of the Regional Tourism and Recreation Initiative.

Action Planned: Capitalize on opportunities to increase understanding and work towards building a consensus about grazing on public lands in the Sierra, including managing and participating in grant projects to foster a collaborative approach in Alpine and Tuolumne Counties and continuing to provide assistance to increase public participation in discussions regarding grazing on the Inyo National Forest.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff facilitated a meeting of the California Department of Parks and Recreation with the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition (CRCC) to discuss the potential for increasing grazing on state parks. The meeting resulted in the formation of a workgroup made up of representatives from State Parks and CRCC to explore possible locations.
- SNC Staff monitored the national forest plan update processes on the Sequoia, Sierra and Inyo forests to understand the implications for grazing on public land and for other national forests in the Sierra.
- Through the SNC's assistance, the following program of work was completed as part of a contract with Center for Collaborative Policy at California State University Sacramento:
 - Inyo National Forest (INF) organized and completed two facilitated field trips to the Kern Plateau for interested parties representing ranching/grazing, fishing, conservation and a water quality regulatory agency. These field trips allowed the parties to visit rested grazing allotments in order to make comparisons to allotments currently being grazed.
 - The INF held a public meeting with interested parties to share results from scientific studies conducted by agency hydrologists, biologists, and ecosystem managers. This public meeting allowed the INF to solicit input from parties on the results of the studies.
 - A report was delivered to INF that captured comments/sentiments from the field trips and public meeting that is being used by the INF as they begin developing their public scoping for a NEPA decision to be made in 2015 on the rested grazing allotments on the Kern Plateau. The report identified key issues to be addressed during the NEPA process.

Action Planned: Stay abreast of and support relevant research and monitoring activities, including projects to quantify the ecosystem services provided by preservation and stewardship of ranches and agricultural lands in the Sierra.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff participated in discussions with agricultural producers relative to quantification of ecosystem services and had specific discussions about ecosystem services benefits and programs with California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (RCD), California Cattlemen's Association, Sierra RCD and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Action Planned: Coordinate with partner organizations and sponsoring efforts to educate members of the legislature, their staff, and other decision-makers regarding the importance of ranches and agricultural lands in the Region.

What was accomplished:

- SNC sponsored the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition Summit and participated in the development of the agenda for the Summit as part of the Coalition Steering Committee.
- SNC sponsored the California Small Farm Conference and participated in sessions devoted to Sierra-based agriculture.

Action Planned: Publish a system indicators report on agricultural lands in the Sierra Nevada.

What was accomplished:

- The System Indicators report on Agricultural Lands and Ranches was approved by the Board in December 2013.

Regional Tourism and Recreation

Action Planned: Solicit and develop new content and destinations for display on the SNGT website.

What was accomplished:

- Staff assisted local contributors in the Region to develop 116 new nominations on the website between July and March. Of these, 62 are agritourism related. The addition of nominations will continue through the end of the fiscal year.

Action Planned: Distribute 60,000 printed MapGuides (second printing).

What was accomplished:

- Almost all of the 60,000 additional print maps have been distributed throughout the Region and beyond. Maps were distributed to California Welcome Centers, travel bureaus, corporate locations in metropolitan centers, visitor centers throughout the Region, and through direct mailings as fulfillment to responses from advertising placements.

Action Planned: Implement a marketing plan aimed at increasing downloads of mobile phone applications (app) and the amount of web traffic visiting the SNGT site on a monthly basis.

What was accomplished:

- An aggressive marketing strategy was implemented resulting in print advertising in the following publications: Sunset, Via, Sierra Heritage Magazine, Adventure Sports Journal, Yosemite Journal, 2014 California Travel Planner, and National Geographic Traveler magazine.
- There were a total of 287,787 visits to the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide website between July and March, representing a projected increase of 34% for the fiscal year.
- Between July and March, total Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide mobile app downloads have increased by 1,940 to a total amount of 6,421.
- The Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project was recognized with the

2013 Excellence in Marketing Award by the California Park and Recreation Society.

Action Planned: Assist in the development of a water trail in the Lower Owens River as a step toward a potential Region-wide water trail; developing criteria to evaluate and prioritize similar potential future projects as well as defining the types of support the SNC could provide.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff coordinated meetings with local stakeholders and Inyo County Supervisors to discuss strategies for implementing portions of the Lower Owens River (LORP) Recreation Use Plan. SNC Staff helped identify future funding sources for implementation, resulting in Inyo County authorizing funds for a programmatic CEQA process for the LORP Recreation Use Plan in order to have the plan adopted in the near future.
- SNC Staff is building support for the Lower Owens River Project with potential partners and presented the concept for the water trail at the State Trails and Greenways conference with representatives from California Department of Boating and Waterways.
- Staff completed a GIS analysis of all navigable waterbodies in the Sierra Nevada to identify a potential locations where future water trail projects may be initiated with assistance from SNC.

Action Planned: Initiate dialogue with partners to “frame the opportunity” and assess interest in developing a regional brand.

What was accomplished:

- Staff further developed the concept of “Regional branding” to be achieved through supporting and developing Region-wide user experiences unique to the Sierra Nevada. Examples include the establishment of a Sierra Water Trails network, and Sierra Nevada agritourism opportunities, which will be the focus of our efforts in 2014-15.

Action Planned: Convene and formalize a Regional partner working group

What was accomplished:

- The Sierra Nevada Geocouncil was re-established and new members were added to the group. The Geocouncil is comprised of volunteers from across the Region and represents a broad range of interests. It focuses on issues specific to the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project, but may be valuable in discussing regional issues related to recreation and tourism in the future. Additionally, SNC Staff has held informal meetings with representatives from a few key Destination Marketing Organizations in the Region to discuss ideas around a Regional working group.

Ecosystem Services

Action Planned: Lead the completion of the Mokelumne Watershed Avoided Cost Analysis, which analyzes how upper watershed restoration treatments, primarily fuel

hazard reduction and forest health management could benefit upstream and downstream beneficiaries by largely reducing costs by preventing fires and the associated costs.

What was accomplished:

- The nearly 300 page analysis was completed in April 2014 with a diverse group of stakeholders. The key findings are that forest health and fire prevention treatments save a minimum of 2 – 3 times the cost of wildfire, reduce the intensity and acreage of wildfire and provide an opportunity for jobs creation in rural communities. The analysis findings and story was carried in multiple media outlets including Sacramento and San Francisco Public Radio, over a dozen newspapers and e-newsletters across California and the nation (Wall Street Journal, Reno Gazette).

Action Planned: Work with project partners to evaluate new opportunities to implement actions based on the outcomes of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis.

What was accomplished:

- SNC and its partners are using the findings of the analysis to strengthen arguments for watershed investment in the water bond and cap and trade discussions.

Action Planned: Collaborate on the Demand Analysis effort to identify and reach out to corporations that are high water volume users in the East Bay Municipal Utilities District (EBMUD) service area. Purpose is to help these downstream beneficiaries understand the importance of secure supply and high water quality for their bottom line and discuss opportunities for them to invest resources in headwaters protection and restoration.

What was accomplished:

- The analysis showed the need to identify new investors, both public and private, to provide the funding needed to transition the forest conditions to a more resilient and healthy state. Staff has met with East Bay Municipal Utility District Board members to begin to explore potential opportunities with their rate payers. In addition, with the support of the National Forest Foundation, the Mokelumne Fund has been established to attract donations for upper watershed restoration work.

Action Planned: Partner on the Mokelumne Environmental Benefits Program to develop the protocol and tools to support an investment framework for potential funders to support restoration efforts throughout the Mokelumne Watershed.

What was accomplished:

- SNC Staff participated on a working group and supported the project with in-kind and cash match over the past two years. The protocols and tools are best applied to the lower watershed ecosystem and therefore staff will no longer engage in this project.

Action Planned: Evaluate the initial findings and future potential of two previously funded projects to quantify any potential water yield increase and change to the

hydrograph that may result from forest and meadow restoration activities: 1) the Sagehen water yield study and 2) the meadow hydrology assessment by the University of Nevada, Reno.

What was accomplished:

- (1) Despite the best efforts by SNC Staff, SNC was not able to fund the Sagehen water yield study; however staff arranged for The Nature Conservancy to fund the project. Work is underway, with results expected in the coming years.
- (2) The drought conditions during the initial meadow hydrology assessment study period hampered a clear analysis of how the observed meadows may or may not alter hydrology. However, the research will extend for one more year to gather more data. This will be funded with existing SNC funds and with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Education and Communications

Action Planned: Elevate the profile of the SNC as an accepted, trusted resource for information regarding the link between upper watersheds, forest health, climate change, clean water, clean air, and sustainable communities.

What was accomplished:

- Staff reviewed and worked with partners to provide comments on the Assembly Water Bond Working Group “Principles for Developing a Water Bond” (Principles) encouraging them to consider modifications to ensure that upper watershed work were included. Worked with partners such as The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and Sierra Business Council to provide comments to the Senate Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Environmental Committee to emphasize the value of the Sierra Nevada Region to the State and to support direct allocation of investment in the Region through the SNC.
- Participated in Office of Planning and Research meetings to develop the draft California Water Action Plan then reviewed and worked with partners to provide feedback resulting in the inclusion of activities for better management of Sierra headwaters in the plan.

Action Planned: Continue relationship-building activities and conducting regular meetings with local/state/federal agencies, legislators and other decision-makers to establish the SNC’s role in protecting and enhancing the Region where more than 60 percent of the State’s developed water supply originates.

What was accomplished:

- Staff utilized SNC’s “Investing in California’s Watershed: Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s Proposition 84 Grant Program” report which highlights the success and value of the SNC grant program as an opportunity to conduct outreach to Legislators and Boards of Supervisors in all 22 counties of the Region.
- SNC conducted 37 meetings with State legislators and legislative staff.
- SNC co-hosted a Rim Fire Legislative Briefing with The Nature

Conservancy designed to educate decision-makers about the long-term impacts events like the Rim Fire can have on California's water, habitat, carbon storage, air quality and communities, as well as to help legislative staff understand the actions and specific investments necessary to reduce the risks of fire and its impacts in the future.

- SNC and the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta Conservancy took historic action in March 2014, signing a joint resolution recognizing the shared challenges facing the two regions, the interconnection between the Sierra and the Delta, and agreeing to work collaboratively to address policies that impact both regions.

Action Planned: Partner with allies to complete Regional tours that demonstrate the value of SNC Initiatives and investment in watershed and forest health projects.

What was accomplished:

- SNC coordinated four tours with partners including Assembly Member Brian Dahle, the Amador Calaveras Consensus Group, USFS, EBMUD, Sierra Foothills Conservancy, and Tuolumne River Trust to bring legislators, researchers and scientists in to the Region for discussions about drought, water supply, water quality, the impact of fire and the need for investment.

Action Planned: Explore opportunities and coordinate efforts to retain regional funding in the 2014 water bond, regional investment from Cap-and-Trade Auction Revenue, and researching opportunities for other funding mechanisms to benefit the Region.

What was accomplished:

- Staff has worked with partners to provide input on a number of water bond proposals to ensure that the Sierra Nevada Region receive a reasonable allocation. Recent amendments to one water bond bills included strong language and funding to upper watersheds. Staff reviewed and provided comments to the California Air Resources Board (ARB) on the Draft Cap-and-Trade Auction Proceeds Investment Plan encouraging ARB to make substantial investment in the forest sector to achieve Greenhouse Gas emission reductions goals.
- The SNC worked with the USFS and CalFIRE to develop a proposal for the expenditure of Cap-and-Trade Auction Revenue. While our efforts to secure funding for the SNC were unsuccessful, the Governor's proposed budget did include a \$50 million allocation for the forest sector.
- SNC is assisting Sierra Business Council in its efforts to organize a broad based Sierra Coalition which will work to ensure that the Sierra Nevada is included in policy and funding discussions about a water bond, Cap-and-Trade investment planning and other longer-term financing mechanisms by positioning "Sierra needs" – such as watershed health ad forest management – as solutions to larger statewide problems and communicating that message with a unified voice to Sierra and urban legislators and other key decision makers.

Action Planned: Develop compelling messages, outreach materials, and appropriate distribution channels and making more effective use of communication vehicles including the SNC Web site, social media outlets, and other tools.

What was accomplished:

- By June 2014, staff will produce and publish a set of four educational interactive maps designed to educate urban legislators in the East Bay, San Francisco, Metropolitan Water District and Los Angeles about the source of their water and the issues and challenges that need to be addressed to ensure long-term water supply and quality.
- Staff developed a series of materials to support efforts to educate legislators and other decision-makers about the need for investment in the upper watersheds of our Region. Materials include a Rim fire Fact Sheet, the Water Fact Sheet, a Fire and California's Water Supply Map, a Bioenergy Fact Sheet and a Drought Fact Sheet.
- In response to seasonal issues such as fire and drought, the SNC has regularly updated our website to provide current information about Sierra Nevada fires, snowpack conditions, statewide reservoir conditions and links to other useful information to keep Sierra Nevada residents, legislators and key decision-makers informed.
- SNC was featured in the news 54 times in the last fiscal year. Articles highlighted SNC projects and initiative work as well as the disbursement of SNC funding throughout the Region. The SNC received our most significant and widespread coverage following the release of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis. Staff also facilitated the release of two special news features including an Op Ed authored by Jim Branham focused on forest management and an Op Ed submitted by Assembly Members Richard Gordon and Brian Dahle in which SNC was highlighted as an effective funding agency.
- The SNC became much more active in its use of social media in 2014. By dedicating staff to active use of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts in the timeframe between January and April 2014, the SNC increased "likes" of our Facebook page nearly 40 percent and added 88 Twitter followers. Staff also began tracking popular social media postings with the goal of sharing additional information of a similar kind.

Action Planned: Create and distribute the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013-14 Annual Report.

What was accomplished:

- This Sierra Nevada Conservancy released the FY 2012-13 Annual Report in December, 2013.

Action Planned: Partner with Sierra-based Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) groups via the Sierra Water Work Group to stay abreast of developments in regional funding and to support them in competing more successfully for funding.

What was accomplished:

- SNC participated in the Sierra Water Work Group (SWWG) which actively supports sierra IRWM groups in a variety of ways.

- SNC sponsored a portion of the 2014 Sierra Summit organized by SWWG to bring regional IRWM groups together for three (3) days of education, discussion and information sessions on topics that may lead to regional favorable policy changes at a state level.

Action Planned: Complete activities related to the Mountain Counties Overlay Regional Report piece of the California Water Plan 2013 Update and staying abreast of developments for Water Plan Update 2018 and the Delta Plan.

What was accomplished:

- Coordinated Regional input and engagement in the Department of Water Resources Water Plan Update 2013 by acting as lead author for the Mountain Counties Overlay Report. The final draft Mountain Counties Overlay Regional Report portion of the California Water Plan Update 2013 was delivered to Department of Water Resources (DWR) in December, 2013. DWR is scheduled to release the full, final Water Plan Update in June, 2014.

Great Sierra River Cleanup (GSRC)

Action Planned: Continue to work with existing river cleanups throughout the Sierra to unite and expand them.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC supported 53 organizations that were also involved with GSRC in 2012.
- The SNC provided all-day cleanup coordinator training intended to make existing cleanups more effective, as well as give new coordinators the tools they need to get started.

Action Planned: Recruit organizations in areas with no river cleanup programs to host cleanups in their areas.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC was able to bring seven new cleanups under the umbrella of the GSRC and another cleanup returned to the GSRC after not participating in the prior year.

Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council)

Action Planned: Execute agreements to accept covenants on lands donated to the US Forest Service.

What was accomplished:

- Conservation Covenant Documents were completed for one donation parcel: Deer Creek. Transfer of this parcel is awaiting confirmation from the California Public Utilities Commission. This Agreement will be the model for all of the following Conservation Covenants (currently estimated at up to

another 9 properties).

Action Planned: Finalize agreements for SNC to carry out certain duties upon the dissolution of the Stewardship Council, including selection of replacement conservation easement holders, and performing monitoring activities.

What was accomplished:

- One Conservation Covenant Services Funding Agreement has been completed for the Deer Creek Donated Parcel to USFS.
- The Third Party Roles Tasks Funding Agreement is in final draft and should be completed prior to June 30, 2014. This will be the model for any future funding agreements for additional tasks.
- SNC will be able to begin requesting reimbursement for tasks completed under these agreements in the new FY.

Action Planned: Establish a funding mechanism to compensate the SNC for tasks performed as described in Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) and subsequent agreements.

What was accomplished:

- It was determined that the SNC would invoice the Stewardship Council for tasks completed under the MOU to be reimbursed under the funding agreements. An invoice format was developed and accepted by the State Controller for this purpose.

Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery (MWFH)

Action Planned: Participate in a workgroup to develop a process for exploring potential uses, ownership, and management of the property.

What was accomplished:

There was very little progress made on this project this year, largely due to circumstances beyond the control of the SNC. However, staff did continue in the ongoing dialogue, including the following:

- SNC Staff held meetings with Inyo County representatives to discuss potential future uses being considered for MWFH and possible ownership partners along with identifying additional funding sources to assist with future management and maintenance of the hatchery.
- SNC Staff communicated with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) regarding the need for completing a Phase 2 environmental site assessment, as recommended by the initial Phase 1 study completed for the site appraisal. The Phase 1 report identified areas of concern on the site. The Phase 2 study would include more testing of the identified sites in order to determine if there were specific environmental issues to be addressed prior to a transfer of ownership. DFW continues to consider whether or not to conduct a Phase 2, placing the overall project in a holding mode.

Action Planned: Participate in development a master plan for the property to guide decision-making.

What was accomplished:

- Once again, little progress was made on this item. The SNC continued to coordinate and facilitate discussions and planning with the DFW, Inyo County, the Friends of the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and other stakeholders to develop a long term master plan for the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery and surrounding property. Inyo County has identified initial ideas for long-term use and management of the facility, but has paused any further development until a decision is reached by DFW about the Phase 2 assessment.

Action Planned: Identify additional stakeholders to engage in the process.

What was accomplished:

- A list of potential stakeholders has been created through input from Inyo County and Friends of Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery.

Action Planned: Effectuate the transfer of property, if deemed necessary and appropriate, from DFW to the SNC and the SNC to another appropriate entity.

What was accomplished:

- No action was taken on this item, given the delays described in earlier items. It remains unclear as to whether the circumstance will exist where SNC ownership is necessary and appropriate.

Action Planned: Determine what, if any, role is appropriate for the SNC in the ultimate disposition of the property and ongoing management.

What was accomplished:

- Progress on this item is dependent on the various issues described above, therefore little has been this year.

Sierra Nevada System Indicators

Action Planned: Publish, following Board approval, the last two in the series of six (6) reports that present the data and analysis associated with nineteen Sierra Nevada System Indicators.

What was accomplished:

- The last two System Indicators reports were completed and presented to the Board in 2013; the report on Fire Threat was approved by the Board in September 2013 and the report on Agricultural Lands and Ranches was approved by the Board in December 2013. All six (6) Indicators reports are published to the SNC Web site for public access and use.

Action Planned: Coordinate System Indicator data and analysis with other internal reports and program efforts to help ensure accurate and consistent assessment of the Region's conditions.

What was accomplished:

- All of the supporting data, tables, charts, and maps have been organized into an internal database which can be utilized by SNC Staff.
- Utilizing SNC data to inform and support other SNC reports and outreach efforts is an ongoing function of the program. Internal training was conducted to ensure staff is aware of the resource and its contents.

Action Planned: Increase website presence of System Indicators and supporting data, with outreach efforts to identify agencies, stakeholders, and other partners who might utilize and benefit from the reports.

What was accomplished:

- The System Indicators reports were relocated to a more visible position on the SNC Web site for better public access and presentation of the information was reorganized for easier use. It was decided that putting the massive supporting datasets on the Web site for direct public use would be impractical and problematic, and would not serve public use well. Rather, the public is encouraged to contact SNC to provide needed clarifications or to request more detailed data analysis (such as providing county-level analysis where only Subregion-level analysis was provided in the Indicator reports).
- SNC participated in an advisory meeting with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) in their development of a set of Statewide Indicators. Our System Indicators reports were provided to OPR as a resource in this effort. SNC is also aiding the Delta Conservancy in their effort to develop a set of environmental indicators. Additional strategic outreach to other state and federal agencies will be ongoing.

Action Planned: Develop specific strategies and timing for future periodic updating of indicator data to enable assessment of changes over time within the SNC Region.

What was accomplished:

- Only some initial steps have proceeded so far on a framework for updating the Indicator data for a second generation of reports. The earliest any updates would occur would be in 2015.

Internal Operations

The SNC had planned to complete the following actions under this initiative by June 2014:

Action Planned: Identify and provide additional training opportunities to ensure staff continue to hone skills and are prepared to effectively implement the SNC mission.

What was accomplished:

- In September we released a Training Procedure to assist staff in identifying and signing up for training. We have received positive feedback from staff on the training process and have had an increase in training attendance.
- Two All-Staff Trainings were completed in this fiscal year which included Project Management Training and Change Management Training. Both of these trainings will help staff carry out projects more efficiently and

effectively.

Action Planned: Implement SNC's safety program, including the development of a department-wide safety committee.

What was accomplished:

- The Safety Committee was established and met to discuss potential safety issues. Safety inspections were performed on each cubicle and space within SNC offices and any needed corrections were made.
- SNC's Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) Manual was created and distributed to staff.

Action Planned: Implement SNC's Equal Employment Opportunity Program, including the development of a department-wide Disability Advisory Committee (DAC).

What was accomplished:

- In coordination with the California Tahoe Conservancy and the State Coastal Conservancy we established a DAC Committee. The DAC identified some facility corrections that could make access for disabled visitors and staff easier. We are researching the feasibility of these recommendations and will continue to work on this next fiscal year.

Action Planned: Improve SNC network and information technology tools and services including continuous hardware assessment and modifications, continuation of web content management (Plone) training, tracking and reporting on service call frequency and trends, and upgrading SharePoint including development and implementation of a migration plan.

What was accomplished:

- The SNC deployed a Microsoft SharePoint 2013 extranet to facilitate collaboration with external partners through document sharing, discussion boards and project timelines in a secure environment.
- Mariposa IT services were transferred to the new facility and a new T1 line (internet access) was installed. This change slightly increased the bandwidth for the Mariposa office. We will continue to look at solutions to improve their internet speed next fiscal year.
- Staff created a Web site content management procedure and training materials. This allows subject matter experts to make Web site updates and revisions themselves. Not having to rely on the IT unit allows for more timely updates to our Web site.
- The SNC upgraded mobile devices. All SNC mobile devices are now smartphones giving staff access to mobile hot spots, work email, and SNC's social media platforms.
- The SNC made changes to our server environment, which provide greater redundancy and the ability to recover from server disruptions more quickly. These changes ensure SNC is following current industry standards.

Action Planned: Improve the SNC Web site navigability, regularly refreshing content and ensuring that content reflects organizational priorities and Region-wide

accomplishments.

What was accomplished:

- Updates have been occurring regularly based on external needs/triggers, funding opportunities, fire impacts, etc. The Web site content management software allows program staff, with proper training, to make many Web site updates immediately.

Action Planned: Improve emergency preparedness and safety through regular staff training and the implementation of table-top exercises and drills. Complete and distribute SNC's Facility Emergency Evacuation Plan for each SNC facility.

What was accomplished:

- Emergency Evacuation Plans were completed and distributed for each SNC office.
- The emergency evacuation team and all staff were trained on proper evacuation procedures. The SNC Auburn Office, in coordination with the building complex, performed a mock fire drill. Fire drills will occur semiannually.
- An Automated External Defibrillator was purchased for the Auburn Office and staff was trained on how to use it in May.