

Background

In addition to continued activity in support of the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) (See [Agenda Item IX](#)), Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff continues to engage in legislative/policy and outreach/communications efforts with goals of raising the profile of the Sierra Nevada, educating legislators and key-decision makers about the value the Region has to the entire state, and identifying new sources of funding for the Region.

Current Status

Legislation

Assembly Bill (AB) 985, signed in July 2015, requires the Senate Committee on Rules and the Speaker of the Assembly to appoint two members each as SNC Legislative Liaisons. In April, both the Senate and the Assembly appointed members to serve in this capacity. Our new Liaisons include Brian Dahle and Frank Bigelow from the Assembly and Ted Gains and Tom Berryhill from the Senate. The role of the Legislative Liaisons will be to regularly meet with SNC staff and Boardmembers to be briefed on SNC activities and issues and to provide input. The SNC is hopeful that this more formal relationship will facilitate relationships to help the SNC to achieve our mission and goals. At the time of this writing, staff was working to schedule welcome meetings with our new Liaisons and thinking through the best ways to actively and effectively engage them in our work.

On an on-going basis, staff tracks legislative bills with an eye for anything that could be relevant to the SNC on a material basis or which could affect the SNC or our communities/partners from a planning, policy, and/or regulatory perspective. Some of the items of interest that staff is tracking now include:

Park Bond

- [AB 2444 \(Garcia\)](#) would expend a currently unidentified amount of money for natural resources and parks throughout California. The SNC is called out in this bill to receive funding should the bill and subsequent bond pass, although amounts of funding are not included in the current draft.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF)

- [AB 2146 \(Patterson\)](#) would require CAL FIRE to develop an accounting system to demonstrate that projects awarded GGRF funds provide a long-term reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- [SB 1386 \(Wolk\)](#) would make it state policy to include protection and management of natural and working lands as a key strategy in meeting the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals. The bill would require all relevant state agencies to consider this policy when revising, adopting, or establishing policies, regulations, expenditures, or grant criteria relating to the protection and management of natural and working lands.

- AB 1550 (Gomez), AB1555 (Gomez), AB 1780 (Medina), AB 1815 (Alejo), and provide direction for an increase in spending GGRF funding in disadvantaged communities

Inner Coast Range Conservancy

- SB 1396 (Wolk) would establish a new conservancy in the Inner Coast range region of California (basically the west side of the Sacramento Valley up to the Coastal Range crest). The language in the bill is modeled after SNC's statute. The bill has passed its initial committee, but its future remains unclear as there are questions as to the need, budget, boundaries, and operations of such a new conservancy.

Meetings

Since the March Board meeting, the staff has conducted meetings with a variety of stakeholders and decisions makers to discuss Sierra issues and identify ways to partner on efforts. Meetings with key staff of state and federal representatives have included Senator Bob Weickowski and Senator Dianne Feinstein's offices as well Senate Budget Subcommittee staff. Meetings with a variety of state departments have occurred including the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, California Natural Resources Agency, the Strategic Growth Council, California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Housing and Community Development, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and an all Conservancies meeting organized and hosted by the SNC. Staff has also been sharing information on SNC's programs by presenting at conferences, briefings, and events including the Natural and Working Lands Scoping Plan Public Workshop, the California Environmental Dialogue, and the Association of California Water Agencies' spring 2016 conference.

California Headwaters Partnership

On April 27th, staff worked with the U.S. Forest Service Region 5 to co-host a webinar on the California Headwaters Partnership. The informational webinar was designed to give attendees an opportunity to learn more about the federal Resilient Lands and Waters Initiative, CA Headwaters Partnership, WIP and associated watershed assessments, and other existing collaborative efforts in the California Headwaters region. Boardmembers Pam Montgomery and Bernie Gyant presented, along with SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham, Tahoe National Forest Supervisor Eli Iliano, and Leslie Jones, Chief of Staff for the Office of the Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. More than 90 people representing more than 50 different organizations registered for the webinar, and approximately 60 people logged in. Staff also developed a [web presence](#) on the SNC website for the California Headwaters Partnership to provide basic information and updates on the Partnership's activities.

Tours

The SNC staff is working on two summer tours focused on getting decision makers out into the Region. The first tour (June 23-24) will be focused on carbon research in the Sierra, and will be co-hosted by SNC and University of New Mexico researcher Matthew Hurteau at the Teakettle Experimental Forest. This tour will inform decision makers about research related to forest thinning, carbon sequestration and storage, and policies the state may want to consider when addressing greenhouse gas emissions. The second tour (July 14-15) will be co-hosted by SNC and the Placer County Water Agency and will highlight the connection between watershed management and water supply, as well as projects and activities in the American River Watershed that are in line with the goals of the WIP.

Outreach and Communications

The SNC staff actively utilizes social media to share information and news clips to help tell the Sierra story, boost our partners' outreach, celebrate successes, and share funding announcements. Social media allows us to connect with our audiences, which include partners and supporters within the Region and decision makers in Sacramento, as well as with other members of the public in a quick and visual way. Staff is always on the lookout for new tools to help achieve these goals. For example, staff recently started announcing new grant awards via [voice-over video](#) posted to our social media sites and the SNC web site.

Staff also utilizes social media to boost our own messaging by connecting with other outreach campaigns. For example, SNC joined the World Water Day campaign on social media by sharing our *Where Does Your Water Come From?* maps for the [Los Angeles Basin](#), [City of Los Angeles](#), [East Bay](#), and [San Francisco](#). Linking our messages to larger, national outreach campaigns allows us to expand our reach and highlight Sierra issues for a broader audience through a theme or organization that they have already identified as providing trusted information.

Current Sierra Nevada Research

In March 2016, the USFS released [California's Forest Resources: Forest Inventory and Analysis, 2001 – 2010](#) (FIA). Though the data only goes through 2010, the report provides the most rigorous look at California's forests available today including breakdowns of forest type, ownership, carbon estimates, and numbers of live and dead trees (along with size classes) by ownership and county. Some of the key takeaways from the FIA data include:

- The counties that make up the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Region comprise more than 50 percent of the forested area in California.
- The SNC Region has almost 60 percent of California's conifer trees (softwoods), with over 3 billion trees.
- Conifers average approximately 180 trees per acre across the region, with the most dense county, Plumas, averaging over 300 conifers per acre in the forested areas.

In addition to providing interesting information about the forest make up of California and our Region, application of FIA data to other tools and data provides context on how fire is affecting our forests both in general and relative to other disturbance, such as drought and insect mortality.

Publication in the International Journal of Wildland Fire

Following the completion of the Mokelumne Avoided Cost Analysis (MACA), two of the sediment modelers, William Elliot (USFS) and Mary Ellen Miller (Michigan Tech Research Institute) worked with staff member Nic Enstice to submit the modeling included in the report for publication. The authors used [Appendix C](#) from the MACA Final Report as the basis for the publication. They condensed the appendix without changing the methods, modeling run, and/or results and added the context of the broader effort to create a standalone paper which was then submitted for peer review. The paper stood up to peer review and was accepted to the International Journal of Wildland Fire in January 2016. In April, the report was officially [published](#) online with the journal release of the publication to follow soon.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to identify and track legislation of importance to the SNC as well as to implement outreach and communications activities in support of SNC programs and activities.

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.