

Background

The Sierra Nevada Region is home to 46 California Native American Tribes listed with the state and contains the ancestral territories of others who may not currently reside within the Region's boundaries. The vast resources of the Region are an important part of tribal members' cultural and spiritual being. The restoration and preservation of the resources of the Region are a common objective for the tribes and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

The development of the Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) is providing an opportunity for the SNC and tribes to talk about areas of common interest, including forest management practices, water and air quality, and preservation of cultural resources. These discussions will provide the SNC with a better understanding of how to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into the WIP and WIP activities. Although SNC staff has engaged in other program areas and activities with the tribes, such as our grant program and the Tribal Water Summit, the WIP provides the platform for a more fundamental conversation between the tribal leaders and the SNC Board about improving our Region and potential areas for partnerships.

To initiate discussions with tribes about the WIP and the Region's current and future conditions, SNC staff is planning a series of meetings, Tribal Forums, coinciding with the SNC Board meetings. Two SNC Boardmembers, as well as SNC staff, will meet with tribal leaders from tribes located within the vicinity of quarterly Board meetings. Using the SNC Board meeting location as the place to hold the Tribal Forums will effectively allow the SNC to meet with tribal leaders throughout the Region.

Current Status

At this writing, the first of the series of Tribal Forums is scheduled to take place Wednesday, June 2, prior to the Board tour. (Information and presentations from the Tribal Forum will be provided to the Board during the meeting)

Next Steps

SNC staff will incorporate lessons learned from the initial meeting and begin planning the next Tribal Forum which will be held in September in Alpine County. As appropriate, information gathered at these forums will be integrated into the assessment and implementation of the WIP in an ongoing manner.

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.