

### **Background**

The Central Subregion of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) includes all of Nevada County and portions of Yuba, Placer and El Dorado Counties with a total population of approximately 400,000 residents. It is the most densely populated Subregion in the Sierra Nevada and portions are subject to severe growth pressures. The Subregion contains all or portions of the major watersheds of the Yuba, Bear and American Rivers. Two main transportation corridors Interstate 80 and Highway 50 and arterials Highways 70 and 49, transect and bisect the Subregion's four counties from east to west and from north to south, respectively. These transportation corridors effectively open up the Central Subregion to access from the densely populated urban centers of Sacramento, Reno and cities of the Bay Area.

Despite the area's urban influences, the four county Subregion remains primarily rural, ranging from the oak savannahs of the low-elevation foothills to the crest of the Sierra Nevada range and beyond. Small communities are distributed throughout the counties of the Central Subregion, with larger urban centers such as Auburn and Placerville located along transportation corridors. The majority (64%) of land in the lower elevations of the Subregion is privately owned, while the remainder (36%) of publicly-owned lands dominates the higher elevations.

Historically, the Subregion was explored by emigrants from the east who were pursuing the dream of riches in gold to be mined from the creeks and rivers of the foothills and mountains. Today, many resident families can tie their past to these pioneers. Ranching, farming and small homesteads still dominate the landscape as you traverse the Subregion. Area residents enjoy four distinct seasons and the countryside attracts millions of visitors each year to quaint historically-renovated main streets, locally grown foods, and world class recreational opportunities such as skiing, river rafting, kayaking, fishing, agritourism, popular historic attractions and parks.

Two SNC program staff members and the Mt. Lassen Area Manager serve constituents and partners in the Subregion. The SNC has developed many effective relationships with organizations in the sub region, and will continue to conduct more outreach in the years to come.

### **Current Status**

SNC has funded a number of Proposition 84 grants in the Central Subregion reflecting a variety of watershed and landscape needs. To date, organizations in the Central Subregion have received approximately \$7.8 million in funding for 37 projects. The range of projects include conservation of working landscapes and open space protection; meadow, riparian and salmonid habitat restoration, mercury remediation and erosion control, and fuels reduction to avoid catastrophic fire. In September of 2010, 26 applications were received from organizations in the Central Subregion. Of those applications 8 were for site improvement or restoration projects, 5 for acquisition or conservation easements, and 13 for pre-project planning and due diligence activities.

Fire and fuels management and loss of the natural resource industry are two key issues being addressed by stakeholders in the Central Subregion. Overly dense forests on both public and private lands are extremely vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire and the proximity of these high danger fire areas to population centers creates enormous concern for residents and local agencies, as well as threatening water quality and habitat throughout Central watersheds. Collaborative stakeholder groups in Nevada, Yuba, and Placer Counties are in various stages of identifying economically feasible opportunities to utilize biomass removed from these forests to create energy and new jobs. All four counties in the Subregion have become signatories of SNC's Sierra Nevada Forest and Communities Initiative (SNFCI) and SNC staff continues to support the efforts of stakeholders by facilitating and attending meetings.

A steady stream of visitors from the densely populated urban centers of Sacramento, Reno and cities of the Bay Area are attracted to the Central Subregion's abundant tourism and recreational opportunities. Not surprisingly nearly 800 nominations were received for the Tahoe Emigrant Corridor Phase of the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project. These nominations highlight everything from local farmers markets to historic driving tours and are intended to draw visitors to a number of local attractions in the counties of the Central Subregion.

Other Central Subregion items SNC staff are monitoring or participating in include: Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) 2013 relicensing projects; Tribal Water Summit planning; participation in the annual Great Sierra River Cleanup; abandoned mine lands mitigation efforts; and conducting legislative area tours.

#### **Next Steps**

The Central Subregion has demonstrated strong support for SNC initiatives and programs, including the SNFCI and Geotourism. Staff will continue to interact with representatives and partners in the Central Subregion to provide resources, services, and expertise.

#### **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.**