

### **Background**

The [Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project](#) is managed through a partnership by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) the [National Geographic Society](#), and the [Sierra Business Council](#).

Through the use of an interactive website, a printed MapGuide, mobile phone application, and social media outlets, the project celebrates and promotes California's Sierra Nevada Region as a world-class vacation destination. The project works to boost tourism while contributing to local communities' economic health, and promoting long-term stewardship of the Region. Local communities are already suggesting that the MapGuide has helped to increase tourism in the Sierra Nevada Region.

Since 2009, through the formation and volunteer efforts of local residents, public land managers, and business owners that make up four regional Geocouncils (the Sierra Cascade, Tahoe Emigrant Corridor, Yosemite Gateways and Southern Sierra), the project has successfully published more than 1,300 unique, personally-written "destination pages". Destination pages offer the locals' perspective on the best experiences, dining, events, and attractions in the Region.

Funding and in-kind support for the project has come from several sources including: The National Scenic Highways and Byways Administration, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, Sierra Business Council, Morgan Family Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks, California Tahoe Conservancy, Nevada Commission on Tourism, multiple Sierra Nevada counties, several Tribal organizations, Northern Sierra Partnership, and many more local businesses and service groups. The project has grown a list of more than 70 [supporters](#) that have formally endorsed the project, including all 22 Sierra Nevada Counties.

### **Current Status**

Project staff continue to assist local contributors add content to the website, but are now primarily focused on marketing and advertising. To date, the project has garnered broad earned-media attention resulting in more than 124 articles in major magazines, and newspapers, which combined with internet, television and radio coverage, have extended the reach of the project to an international level.

Strategic placement of additional advertising in key California markets this year is expected to double traffic to the website and increase travel to the Region. Marketing strategies include purchased advertising for the internet, print, radio, and special events. Advertising and marketing will be complemented through distribution of 100,000 printed MapGuides.

Recent accomplishments in project content deserve some special notice. Working with California State Parks, SNC project interns have completed destination pages for 52 Historical Landmarks in the Sierra Nevada. When completed, 237 destination pages for all Historical Landmark Monuments in the SNC Region will be instantly accessible to travelers using Droid or iPhone hand-held mobile devices. Significant progress is also being made to complete destination pages for all California Watchable Wildlife locations in the Region.

Web site traffic is monitored closely and continues to grow each month. Reports for the month of December indicate more than 16,000 visits from people in 92 countries.

Project staff also continues to participate in the National Geocouncil, which is focused on leveraging the exposure of eight U.S. Geotourism Projects. Most recently, lead by efforts at the SNC, the National Geocouncil provided information to the Western Governors' Association (WGA) and the Western States Tourism Policy Council to recognize U.S. Geotourism Projects as significant contributions towards achieving WGA's "Get Out West" initiative, America's Great Outdoors Initiative, and the recently launched presidential initiatives to increase U.S. travel and tourism.

### **Next Steps**

Staff and project partners will continue to develop website content and explore new opportunities to market and increase exposure to potential visitors. SNC Staff will also take specific actions to support the implementation of SNC's Strategic Plan, such as strengthening a "Sierra" brand to help define the Region, supporting new opportunities to provide volunteer experiences for visitors to the Region, supporting agritourism opportunities for visitors to appreciate and experience Sierra ranches and farms, and supporting efforts to increase the public's ability to access public lands.

Maintenance and growth of the project will require continued efforts to raise funds or generate revenue. SNC staff and project partners will continue to seek and secure new sources to support the project.

### **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.**