



Board Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2008

The Pines Resort, Lakeview Room A

5449 Road 432

Bass Lake, CA 93604

I. Call to Order

Chairman Chrisman called the meeting to order at 9:14 AM.

II. Oath of Office for New Boardmembers

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul swore in new Boardmembers Steve Wilensky (South Central Subregion) and Rose Comstock (North Central Subregion) and alternate Boardmember Tom Wheeler (South Subregion).

III. Roll Call

Present: Steve Wilensky, John Brissenden, Mike Chrisman, Brian Dahle, Byng Hunt, Tom Wheeler alternate for Jon McQuiston, Bob Kirkwood, John Lloyd, Byron Sher, Robert Weygandt, Carol Whiteside, Chris Iverson, Bill Haigh, and Mike Tollefson

Absent: BJ Kirwan

IV. Approval of December 6, 2007 Meeting Minutes

There were no changes to the Meeting Minutes.

Action: Boardmember Weygandt moved and Boardmember Hunt seconded a motion to approve the December 6, 2007 Board Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Public Comments

Olivia Diaz, Sierra Club stated that she is monitoring the unveiling of the SNC license plate, which she thinks is a lovely plate that is friendly, yet has the powerful symbol of the bear.

Brent Harper, Fire Chief, Mammoth Lakes Fire Department, spoke on behalf of a project the fire department submitted for grant funding. It was not recommended for funding, because the project did not have environmental documents completed at the time of the deadline. Mr. Harper stated that the fire department views this as an important project and that he has been meeting with interested parties on the project and all of the players are in place. He indicated he hoped to have the project before the Board in the future.

Paul Chapman stated that SNC publicly noticed a meeting in the Mariposa paper in September 2007 with an incorrect date and that the address for the December Board meeting was incorrect on the SNC Web site. Mr. Chapman also commented on three projects in Mariposa County, which he believes should not be approved by the Board.

VI. Chairman's Report

a. State Budget Update

Chairman Chrisman stated that the state budget situation is dire. The Administration instituted a 10% reduction for General Fund programs in the current fiscal year to begin to address a very large budget deficit. The SNC is a specially funded program and at this point is unaffected by the budget woes.

To address the General Fund deficit in the budget year, the Administration is recommending closure of 48 of the 278 park units, which has never been done before. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's fire suppression activities are funded out of the General Fund, but receive additional funding out of the State's emergency fund when needed.

VII. Election of Vice Chair

Chairman Chrisman explained that it was time for the annual election of Vice Chair, thanking Boardmember Dahle for serving as Vice Chair for the past year. Boardmember Dahle thanked the Board for electing him last year and nominated Boardmember Weygandt to be the new Vice Chair. There were no more nominations.

Action: Boardmember Dahle moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded a motion to approve the election of Boardmember Weygandt as the Vice Chair of the Board. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Executive Officer's Report

a. Budget/Staffing Update

Executive Officer Jim Branham indicated that the budget process has been smooth for SNC this year and that the budget proposed for SNC in the Governor's Budget is in a good position to be approved by the Legislature. Branham explained the budget document in the packet, stating that expenditures during the first seven months of the fiscal year reflect less-than-full staffing levels and one-time start up costs for the area offices. Branham stated that the amount spent on interagency agreements is expected to decrease next year while the cost of salaries and wages will increase, because the SNC is now almost fully staffed. He stated the only remaining unfilled position is for legal counsel. Boardmember Comstock asked about the need for the legal counsel. Branham explained that SNC borrows John Gussman from the Tahoe Conservancy and has Christine Sproul assigned from the Attorney General's Office. He indicated the while the SNC appreciates the cooperation of the Tahoe Conservancy, the extent of the workload now requires that the SNC fill our own legal counsel position.

Branham informed the Board that a number of new staff members have been hired since the last Board meeting, including: Pete Dufour, Administrative Services Manager; Shana Avalos Knott, Outreach & Partnership Coordinator; Lynn Campbell, Program Analyst, and; Jan Martell, Executive Assistant. The Mt. Lassen staff added Chris Dallas, Mt. Lassen Area Representative and Brittany Juergenson, Mt. Lassen Area Analyst, who was promoted from the receptionist position. The Mt. Whitney staff added Wendy Vittands and Liz Chatten as consultants in the Mariposa office.

Branham thanked Julie Leimbach of the Sierra Nevada Alliance for all of her assistance and welcomed Morgan Fessler, who has taken over Julie's previous position.

b. Climate Change Update

Branham noted that the SNC is partnering with the Tahoe Conservancy and the US Forest Service in the development of a Sierra Climate Change Action Plan. With the support of the Resources Legacy Fund, the group has engaged Steve Eubanks, who recently retired as Superintendent of the Tahoe National Forest to coordinate outreach and development of a proposal. Chairman Chrisman suggested having Mr. Eubanks contact Tony Brunello at Agency.

c. Sierra Nevada Strategic Investment Team

Branham thanked and acknowledged the Department of Fish and Game and the Wildlife Conservation Board for working with SNC. He suggested that the SNC staff will be holding quarterly meetings with them. He indicated the SNC will continue to work with other agencies to determine opportunities for cooperation.

d. Permanent Headquarters Location Process

Branham noted that the initial search for an interim headquarters location concluded with a site in Auburn. The location has worked well since June 2007, but there are additional features that a permanent headquarters location would ideally provide. These would include having a "green" building, having the ability to have the office be more of a part of the community, and having some community space to tell the story of the Region. The SNC has released a notice requesting ideas for possible site locations that would meet our requirements (which include being within a half hour travel distance from our current location). To date, proposals have been received for sites in Colfax, Nevada City, Coloma and Auburn, including a proposal that would involve making changes to our current location. SNC will analyze the potential viability of the suggested sites and present a recommendation at the June meeting.

e. October Sierra Event

SNC is co-sponsoring a conference with the Sierra Business Council (SBC) at Mammoth Mountain in October. Both organizations agree that the conference should provide attendees with useful tools and information, which can immediately be applied to issues within the Region. Potential topics for the conference include:

- o Greening of the Sierra
- o Ecosystem services

Another important aspect of the conference will be the involvement of youth to engage them in conference discussions, particularly around how best to market the importance of the Sierra and Sierra issues to their generation.

Staff will share more specific information with the Board about the conference as it becomes available.

IX. Deputy Attorney General's Report

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul reminded the Board to please complete and file their annual Conflict of Interest Statements with Theresa Burgess. Sproul noted the Board's obligation to renew ethics training, noting the link will be sent to them from Theresa. Boardmember Comstock asked if the Board of Supervisors training would satisfy the State's requirements. Sproul noted it would not and Supervisors would need to complete the State's ethics training. DAG Sproul complimented the CEQA documentation preparation.

X. Sierra Nevada Conservancy License Plate

Jim Branham gave an overview of the status on the development of the marketing plan developed by Velocity 7 (V7) under direction of The Sierra Fund. Staff distributed proto type plates, made by Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), for the Board and audience to view. Izzy Martin, The Sierra Fund, explained the process in moving forward with the marketing plan, and introduced Robert Trent, Pamela Biery, and Shawn Garvey from Velocity 7.

Robert Trent reviewed the marketing plan (distributed to the Board and audience), noting 7,500 prepaid registrations are required within one year of the first registration being collected. There are three phases in the marketing plan; 1) high level participation 2) media participation in the Region and 3) the ongoing marketing.

Chairman Chrisman asked for an accounting of the budget and an explanation of how the money will be used. Members of the V7 team provided an explanation of the various phases. Chairman Chrisman stated he felt that \$350,000 may not be adequate for the campaign. Izzy Martin noted the issue of raising funds is difficult and mentioned that she would like to create an advisory committee with Assemblymember John Laird and former Senator/Assemblymember Tim Leslie serving as co-chairs of the committee.

Boardmember Sher asked for clarification of the mechanics of obtaining signatures. Robert Trent responded that examples could be put online or printed forms distributed at meetings in the Region. Boardmember Sher asked about the plan to explain to interested plate purchasers, that the plate may not be available for a year. Trent explained that the vision is to have information on the Web site, stay in regular contact with them, and provide updates in different newsletters, to constantly keep people engaged. Boardmember Whiteside asked if the credit cards will be charged at the time of commitment or when the "approved" signatures are submitted to DMV. Izzy Martin replied is not possible to hold the transaction, DMV requires the funds upfront, however, funds would be returned if the plate is not created. She mentioned that one of the ideas is that once you make the payment, there could be a carbon offset. Boardmember Tollefson commented that it is a wonderful thing and there has to be a way to engage the auto dealers in the Region. Branham noted statute states once the funds are flowing then 25% of funds can be used for marketing and at that time the SNC can market additional plates.

Judy Hyatt, Supervisor McQuiston Office asked if there has been consideration of a performance bond to supplement the funds on this. Chairman Chrisman noted that he did not think this would be allowed.

Action: Boardmember Hunt moved and Boardmember Willensky seconded a motion to approve the final design and direct staff to submit to Department of Motor Vehicles for formal approval. The motion passed unanimously with Boardmember John Brissenden recusing himself from voting.

XI. Strategic Opportunity Grants

Branham introduced Bob Kingman, Kim Carr and Linda Hansen to present the Board with staff recommendations for Strategic Opportunity Grant (SOG) awards.

Kingman reported three adjustments to the exhibit shown in the Board packet were highlighted in orange and represented projects that had been withdrawn or removed for further CEQA review.

Kingman reported that three grants had been authorized by the Executive Officer since the last meeting. The total amount authorized was \$88,745. The Executive Officer also authorized a 10% augmentation of two grants authorized at \$44,530 in December 2007, to the California Fire Safe Council to cover administrative fees that had been accidentally omitted.

Kingman reported that the SNC received a total of 79 new, eligible applications by the December 31, 2007 deadline. These were added to 29 eligible applications, which were deferred from the first round of (SOG) awards, for a total of 108 applications reviewed by staff. The total dollar amount requested for all projects in this round of SOGs was \$12,985,089.

Kingman described briefly a list of projects being recommended for funding from the Region-wide allocation.

Kim Carr provided an overview of recommended SOG grant awards in the Mt. Lassen Area and Mt. Whitney Area Subregions.

Kingman suggested the appropriate language for Board authorization of a total of 55 grants for a total of \$4,305,320 in funding.

Staff further recommends the Board authorize the shifting of remaining funds from individual Subregion and Region-wide SOG allocations as necessary to facilitate additional grant recommendations in June.

Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Dahle seconded a motion to authorize Strategic Opportunity Grants listed in Attachment A to the Agenda, and further authorize staff to enter into all necessary contracts or agreements and file the appropriate CEQA documentation with the State Clearinghouse for all projects, as well as authorizing staff to shift funds among all grant categories as necessary. The motion passed unanimously.

Attachment A provides a list of the Strategic Opportunity Grants approved by the Board.

XII. Competitive Grants

Bob Kingman reported that a total of 32 applications requesting \$17,647,268 million were determined to be eligible for Proposition 84 Competitive Grant funding and were reviewed by staff. Six of the applications, totaling about \$1.8 million in requests, were found to be more suitable as Strategic Opportunity Grants and were moved into that category with concurrence from the grant applicants.

Kingman stated that staff recommended 13 grants, totaling \$6,831,922 million, for funding at this time. Staff plans to bring recommendations for the remainder of the competitive grant funds to the Board in June. In addition, in order to fully encumber SNC's FY 07-08 Proposition 84 funds by June 30, staff recommended that the Board authorize the use of any remaining funds from the Competitive Grant allocation for SOG projects, subject to Board approval at the June meeting.

Boardmember Sher asked about the status of the Wakamatsu project since it was pulled from the recommendation. Kingman noted the appraisal review came back with an unsupportable value of the property. He indicated that negotiations with the appraiser and Department of General Services (DGS) to reconcile the amount and it could come before the Board in June.

Boardmember Kirkwood, questioned applicants that did not have CEQA review completed prior to this meeting. Would they come before the Board in June? Kingman explained based on the current Guidelines the applicants did not meet the timeline for getting complete documentation submitted to SNC for review and therefore did not meet the requirements in the Guidelines. Kingman noted that due to this, there may be a small portion of funds leftover and staff is recommending authority to reallocate any remaining funds to SOG categories.

Boardmember Kirkwood questioned three projects which have project titles that may cause the public to question the connection to Proposition 84. Boardmember Whiteside commented clearly the passion of the applicant does not always convey the scientific and governmental purpose of the grant request and suggested the SNC provide assistance to applicants in determining project titles. .

Kingman then read the following recommendation, "Staff recommends a total of 13 grants and \$6,831,922 in funding. Staff further recommends the Board authorize the pooling of any remaining funds in the competitive allocation for grants in any other SNC grants categories."

Action: Boardmember Wilensky moved and Boardmember Weygandt seconded a motion to: authorize Competitive Grants listed in Attachment A; adopt the Lower Owens River Project EIR/EIS and make findings concurrent with findings adopted by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and direct staff to file a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse; adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration and make findings concurrent with the recommendations previously adopted by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board for

the Merrill Davies Stream and Meadow Restoration Project; and further authorize staff to enter into all necessary contracts or agreements and file the appropriate CEQA documentation with the State Clearinghouse for all projects. The motion passed unanimously. Boardmember Brissenden recused himself from voting on The Sierra Fund application. *Attachment B provides a list of the Competitive Grants approved by the Board.*

Public Comment

Izzy Martin, Executive Director of The Sierra Fund, thanked the Board and staff for “saving the Yuba River”.

Chuck Peck, with the Sierra Foothill Conservancy, thanked the Board and the staff for approving their project, and introduced Cindey Bohna, the owner of the project property.

Cindey Bohna, Land owner, thanked the staff and Board and invited everyone to come out for a tour on her ranch.

XIII. Grant Guideline Revisions

Jim Branham reviewed key policy issues associated with the proposed guidelines and noted that Ken Jones has worked to pull the issues together for Board review. Proposed changes include reducing the number of grant categories and modifying the grant fund limits for Competitive grants to \$250,000 minimum and \$1,000,000 maximum. For SOG 1 the minimum limit is proposed to be \$5,000 up to \$250,000; and SOG 2 grants (not acquisition or site improvements/restorations) up to \$500,000. A copy of the proposed guidelines for 2008-09 was included in the Board packet.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked why there would be a minimum under Strategic Opportunity Grants. Branham explained some projects are very straight forward and do not require CEQA or other review and that even a small amount can make a big difference for smaller organizations.

Boardmember Comstock asked why there is a higher cap on SOG 1s then SOG 2s. Branham explained that SOG 1 and Competitive Grants are similar in the types of projects they fund, creating an opportunity for projects up to \$1 million, while SOGs are capped at \$500, 000, consistent with a goal of focusing more resources on “on the ground” projects.

Branham indicated that staff is also proposing a revision to have the SOGs in two rounds and the Competitive grants will remain in one round. Lastly, he stated that it is recommended that the guidelines clearly state that grant funds may not be used to address regulatory violations non-compliance of any law or regulation.

Boardmember Kirkwood suggested that the Board give thought on how to provide guidance to people on the limitations of Proposition 84 funds to narrow down the scope of projects received.

Boardmember Wilensky commented on how the Competitive Grants are structured, stating that the best organized communities that are economically advantaged will do better, but some of the most degraded and challenging areas for restoration are least likely to come up with something that meets the standards we have set forth. He is concerned that they will not have the capacity to produce, and he's not sure how to reconcile this. Branham noted that staff works hard to ensure that it is not the best written application, but is the project with the most merit that receives funding. SNC staff has identified areas where this situation exists and works with communities and organizations to help create capacity.

Branham explained the next steps include six workshops in the Region and a public review draft will be posted on the SNC Web site on April 9th for a 30 day comment period. Chairman Chrisman appointed Boardmembers Kirkwood and Wilensky to serve as the Board committee to work with staff on the guidelines project.

XIV. Indicators and Performance Measures Project Update

Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan briefed the Board on the status of the Indicators and Performance Measures Project. She reminded the Board that we are developing the indicators and measurements on three levels: System Indicators, Program Performance Measures, and Project Performance Measures. Keegan explained that SNC has engaged a consultant team to work on the project. The team is led by ProPoint Technology and includes individuals from the Sierra Institute for Community and the Environment, Environmental Incentives, American Rivers and the Sierra Business Council.

Bill Foster of ProPoint Technology presented information on the team's approach to the project, which is occurring in four phases. The first two phases, which involved project planning and the development of conceptual lists of performance measures and indicators, are completed. The next phase will involve getting broad input through Subregional workshops and web conferences, a survey, and discussions with a Stakeholder Advisory Group. The fourth phase will involve developing the final draft set of indicators and performance measures for Board consideration along with an implementation plan.

Chairman Chrisman appointed Boardmembers Whiteside and Weygandt to serve on a Board committee to help guide the project.

XV. Boardmembers' Comments

Boardmember Dahle noted the next meeting is in the Fall River Valley in Shasta County (North Subregion) and is planned at the Intermountain Fairgrounds. The tour is expected to include a plug and pond project and a fuel reduction project. This will be a good time of year in the area.

Boardmember Willensky, wanted to comment on his experience at his first meeting, noting with the irate taxpayer this morning he was concerned, but after hearing all of the thank yous from the grant recipients it was very pleasing and obviously this Board is doing something good. The grant that the Board authorized to the Chips project, for clearing 100 foot clearances around senior's houses, is making it more fire safe in our

area. Thank you for authorizing this grant, it has created all kinds of jobs and allowed the project to move from concept to implementation.

XVI. Public Comments

Joan Clayburgh, Sierra Nevada Alliance (SNA) Executive Director stated she did not attend December's meeting, but wanted to thank the Board for the grants awarded to SNA. Clayburgh commented that her staff and the 95 groups the SNA represents can't stop commending SNC staff on a job well done. Ms. Clayburgh then read a comment letter submitted by Lisa Wallace dated on March 10, 2008 (letter included in packet of materials).

Tom Esgate, Lassen County Fire Safe Council noted the Conservancy was highlighted in a recent presentation he did and will also highlight SNC in the Lassen County model, indicating Lassen County no longer builds fuel breaks they treat the community and one of the biggest challenges is the educating people living in the area.

Jay Watson, Student Conservation Association thanked the Board for the approved grant. It will allow the SCA to get another youth group out in the Inyo area. He indicated he had conveyed to Mr. Branham the SCA's willingness to work with SNC and the Board with ideas on youth involvement in the Region.

Dr. Carol Baird, California Institute for Biodiversity thanked the Board for honoring her group with a grant to bring The Sierra Nevada into the classroom. Dr. Baird also thanked Lynn Campbell, SNC staff for her assistance in the process.

Soapy Mulholland, Sequoia Riverlands Trust thanked the Board and staff. Ms. Mulholland stressed the importance of education, stating that if we don't get this generation out on the land, what we conserve will not matter. She noted a recent survey that showed only 4 out of 30 university students have been to one our national parks.

Izzy Martin, The Sierra Fund; Ms. Martin announced the Sierra Day at the Capitol, indicating that Sierra supporters will be requesting that the SNC budget be approved and will remind the legislature how wonderful the SNC is to the Region. The Sierra Fund's mission is to bring increased private and public investment to the Sierra. She noted that fire safety is an important issue that the SNC is addressing. She pointed out that another crucial issue is the impact of the gold rush 150 years ago -- abandoned mines, mercury in the water system, and mining toxins. The Sierra Fund's report on this issue was released last week at the State Assembly. The number one conclusion was that SNC needs to play a coordinating role as the clearing house on the mining toxins.

XVII. Adjournment

Chairman Chrisman adjourned the meeting at 1:29 PM.