

Background

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism (SNGT) MapGuide Project is a multi-faceted tourism promotion effort managed through a partnership of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC), National Geographic, and the Sierra Business Council (SBC). Through the use of an interactive web site, a printed MapGuide, mobile phone applications (apps), and social media tools the project highlights and promotes California's Sierra Nevada Region as a tourism and recreation destination. The project supports the SNC's mandate to enhance tourism in the Sierra Nevada Region while also protecting and conserving the region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources.

Funding and in-kind support for the project has come from several sources, in addition to the SNC, including: The National Scenic Highways and Byways Administration, Sierra Business Council, Morgan Family Foundation, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks, Nevada Commission on Tourism, multiple Sierra counties, several Tribal Entities, Northern Sierra Partnership, and many more local businesses and service groups. The project has a list of more than 92 supporting entities that have formally endorsed the project, including all 22 Sierra Nevada counties.

In early 2012 the SNC purchased and launched mobile phone apps for iPhone and Android users providing access to all of the SNGT web site content while traveling in the Region. Users have the option of enabling GPS technology to enhance functionality of the apps for real-time updates based on their current location in the Sierra. The SNC paid \$20,000 from its base budget allocation for development of the apps, and as a result acquired them both for unlimited use from National Geographic. More than 5,700 people have downloaded the apps, which are available for free to the public.

Current Status

To date, the development of the project and its supporting products have been co-managed by the SNC and the SBC in conformity with National Geographic standards for all Geotourism Projects. Staffs from both organizations have developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the future management strategy of the project. As the project has shifted from a construction phase to a business-maintenance phase the partners have agreed that consolidating management of business operations will lead to more efficient decision-making and use of staff resources. The MOU outlines the ongoing commitments of the SBC to manage the business aspects of the project consistent with National Geographic standards, and also identifies the ongoing roles of the SNC, such as: annual reviews of sponsorship and marketing plans, review and development of new web site content, and public outreach efforts.

The SBC has agreed to negotiate and enter into new agreements with National Geographic for web site hosting and maintenance. The SBC has also agreed to assume ongoing ownership and maintenance responsibilities of the mobile phone

applications, which are integrally connected to the web site. Since the mobile phone applications were originally procured by the SNC, it is now appropriate and necessary for the SNC to grant ownership of the mobile applications to SBC.

SNC Staff have confirmed with Department of General Services, Technology Acquisitions Branch and the State Attorney General's Office that the proposed grant of the mobile phone applications is legal and within the authority of the SNC Board. The proposed grant of mobile phone applications is not considered a project under California Environmental Quality Act guidelines and does not require any environmental review documentation.

Next Steps

If approved by the Board, staff will prepare and execute a grant agreement with SBC outlining the terms of the grant and ensuring that the mobile phone applications continue to be available for free download to the public and any sponsorship or advertising revenue generated from the apps be used solely to support the SNGT Project.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board authorize a grant to the Sierra Business Council of full ownership of two mobile phone applications for the Sierra Nevada Geotourism MapGuide Project and direct staff to develop and execute a grant agreement to facilitate the transfer.