

Background

At the June 2017 Board Meeting, the Board directed Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) staff to conduct a strategic assessment and to update the organization's Strategic Plan. Subsequently, the Board approved a schedule that provides for a draft Strategic Plan in September 2018, and final Strategic Plan and 2018-19 Action Plan at the December 2018 Board meeting. This schedule allows the Plan to reflect the provision of any new funds that may be approved by voters in the upcoming June and November elections. The new Strategic Plan will tackle urgent, contemporary issues including uncharacteristically large wildfire, unprecedented tree mortality, and the lasting impacts of years-long, severe drought. The Plan will also address the effects of climate change on our watersheds, forests and communities.

As part of the Strategic Assessment conducted from September 2017 through January 2018, staff completed broad and comprehensive outreach which included inviting over 400 stakeholders representing more than 300 organizations to participate in written idea generation and meetings regarding Regional needs and the roles that SNC should play in meeting them. Stakeholders submitted more than 250 written ideas and responses and staff received significant verbal input. Stakeholders included urban representatives from various industries dependent on the upper watersheds in the Region for their businesses, as well as public sector organizations and tribes. Input was also solicited from stakeholders who live and work in the Region, stakeholders working in Regional and statewide organizations, federal and state stakeholders, and County Supervisor Liaisons to the SNC throughout the Region.

In March 2018, the Board approved the following three-tiered plan structure:

- **SNC Regional Goals** which will reflect broad desired outcomes for the entire Region, consistent with SNC's mission and statutory authorities, and assuming significant involvement of SNC partners and Regional stakeholders.
- **Strategies** for achieving Regional Goals which will define SNC's role and contributions in achieving the Goal and which are intended to organize and prioritize SNC resources in order to maximize SNC's contributions to the Goal.
- **Cross-cutting Activities** which will reflect areas of activity within the SNC that will be undertaken to support the organization and generally assist in achieving the Goals and Strategies identified above.

In March 2018, the Board approved the following Regional Goals under which strategies to guide SNC activities will be developed:

1. SNC Regional Goal: Healthy Forests and Watersheds:
Restore the ecological health and resilience of forests and watersheds within the Sierra Nevada Region.
2. SNC Regional Goal: Vibrant Recreation and Tourism
Enhance, promote, and develop sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities in the Sierra Nevada Region.

3. SNC Regional Goal: Strategic Lands Conserved
Permanently protect lands that are at risk of conversion and provide significant benefits including working landscapes, public access, and protection of unique natural areas and/or key habitat.
4. SNC Regional Goal: Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
Increase the environmental, economic, and social resilience of Sierra Nevada communities.
5. SNC Regional Goal: Impactful Regional Identity
Improve statewide recognition of the value and benefits the Sierra Nevada provides and increased integration of the importance of the Sierra Nevada into state policy and funding decisions.

Current Status

WIP Coordination Within the Strategic Plan

The SNC launched the Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program (WIP) in March 2015 with the goal of increasing the pace and scale of ecological restoration, addressing policy impediments, and increasing infrastructure in the Region. Since that time, the WIP has been recognized as a model program for focusing resources and activities at the most difficult and dangerous of problems and achieving success in breaking down organizational, political, and bureaucratic barriers. It was intended that the WIP would approach watershed issues in a comprehensive manner, but efforts to date have largely focused on forest health issues. This Strategic Plan provides an opportunity for the WIP to become the organization's overarching initiative, using a holistic approach to watershed and community health and resilience. It is clear that the magnitude of the challenges resulting from current conditions and a changing climate require a program that can truly increase the pace and scale of needed actions at a landscape scale.

This approach will allow a wider and deeper group of partners and agencies to engage in the WIP, more clearly seeing their priorities and programs embodied in it. It likewise will provide the SNC and its partners with the opportunity to tell a more compelling story as to the full range of activities needed to restore resilience and how these activities relate to each other. The linking of the WIP and the Strategic Plan positions the SNC to provide leadership and serve as a catalyst on issues of importance to the Region and the state of California. It also provides the platform for coordination of other efforts and initiatives being undertaken consistent with the goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan.

Such an approach will require a different partnership with the USFS Region 5, SNC's primary partner in the WIP. One idea that has been explored would be a Good Neighbor Agreement with Region 5, defining the relationship between the two organizations. There will also be an opportunity for the SNC to formalize partnerships under WIP that benefit both/all parties involved.

Draft Strategies

Staff is requesting that the Board review, provide feedback, and approve the strategies recommended in [Attachment A](#) for further refinement and inclusion in the draft Strategic Plan. These strategies have been developed considering expected SNC fiscal and personnel resources, SNC's staff experience and expertise, and potential partnering opportunities that have been identified. The strategies also reflect SNC's understanding of the work, priorities and resources of other agencies and partners who engage in activities consistent with the SNC's mission. This allows the SNC to consider undertaking the activities that address the strengths of the SNC and are the most appropriate and beneficial to achieving the identified goals.

Upon Board approval of these strategies, staff will immediately begin development of a draft Strategic Plan based on the Regional goals and strategies identified. Staff will take into account additional public comment received during this period. [Attachment B](#) – Vibrant Recreation and Tourism Regional Goal – provides a sample set of the types and kinds of actions staff may undertake to implement the strategies under this goal. The dollar signs in front of each action represent the three potential financial scenarios that may result from the June and November elections. Depending on the outcomes, an Annual Action Plan will be developed in conjunction with the final Strategic Plan. The sample actions presented in Attachment B are not intended to be all-inclusive of actions expected to be presented in December; they are only included here to demonstrate how strategies and actions will work together. The financial scenarios we are considering are:

- \$: Neither Proposition 68 nor the Meral Water bond pass
- \$\$: Proposition 68 passes giving the SNC \$55 million in new funding
- \$\$\$: Proposition 68 and/or the Meral Water bond pass giving the SNC between \$250 and \$305 million in new funding

Key Questions for Board Consideration

As we begin to draft the Strategic and Action Plans, staff is requesting Board input on the following questions:

1. Does the inclusion of the WIP as the coordinating program over the implementation of the Strategic Plan and its Goals, Strategies, and Actions make sense? Does it add strength and focus to the Plan and the expected outcome of SNC efforts over the next three to five years?
2. Are the strategies identified in Attachment A appropriate for guiding SNC efforts in the coming years? Are there any strategies that need additional clarification? Are there any strategies that should be removed?
3. Are there other strategies that should be included?

[Attachment C](#) provides a summary of the current request, including key steps that have been taken and are upcoming in the development of SNC's Strategic Plan.

Next Steps

Staff will incorporate Board input and direction, consider additional public comment, and develop a draft Strategic Plan for Board consideration at the September 2018 Board meeting. Staff will also begin development of actions that support implementation of the strategies and expects to bring a final Strategic Plan and 18-month Action Plan to the Board for approval in December 2018. Staff will continue to work with the Board committee of Terry O'Brien and Doug Teeter in development of the Plan and continue to consider relevant new developments.

Recommendation

Staff requests that the Board provide feedback and guidance regarding (a) the recommended strategies and their inclusion in a draft Strategic Plan and (b) the integration of WIP in the Strategic Plan as its implementation program.