



The Sierra Fund's 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Sierra Fund's mission is to restore ecosystem and community resiliency in the Sierra Nevada

INCREASING VISIBILITY OF GOLD RUSH IMPACTS

- ♦ In February, The Sierra Fund (TSF) released a five-year Strategic Plan, A Platform for Action, articulating solutions that will benefit the entire state, from the Sierra to the sea. By working with relevant stakeholders in collaborative forums, we engage others in our work to restore ecosystem and community resiliency.
- ♦ In May, TSF held our biennial Reclaiming the Sierra conference. Over 200 experts gathered for technical presentations on restoring forests and meadows, remediating mines, and using regional models to increase project effectiveness. Panelists debated topics ranging from water infrastructure, mining regulations, and contaminated reservoir discharge to "ethical gold."
- ♦ In July, TSF launched the Headwater Mercury Source Reduction Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to leverage the outcomes of our DWR-funded Mercury Forum and to facilitate a regional strategy to address mercury contamination in Sierra Nevada watersheds. This quarterly forum has four strategic foci: hydraulic mines, reservoirs, fish, and forests.

FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTALLY HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- ♦ **POST IT DAY:** On August 5, TSF held our third annual Post It Day event to increase the visibility of state-issued public health advisories for mercury-contaminated fish. We worked with staff of the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) to get advisories in our project area translated into Spanish, and engaged local environmental groups, waterbody owners, and volunteers in posting fish consumption advisories in both Spanish and English.
- ♦ **SPANISH PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS:** This fall we worked with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Deer Creek Broadcasting to develop and broadcast a Spanish-language public service announcement (PSA) about healthy local fish consumption. The PSA featured a child in conversation with a parent, highlighting high mercury fish (black bass) and low-mercury fish (rainbow trout) to illustrate choices that reduce exposure.
- ♦ **FISH TISSUE AND ANGLER SURVEY DATA:** We continued our efforts to collect fish tissue data that can be used in the development of site-specific fish consumption advisories as well as surveying anglers to better understand exposure risk. Over the last two years, 221 additional surveys of people fishing have been collected for a total of over 370 surveys.
- ♦ **IDENTIFYING DAC NEEDS:** Key to fostering environmental health is meeting the needs of our regional under-represented and disadvantaged community (DAC) stakeholders. TSF advocated to ensure that the DWR-required DAC assessment for the Mountain Counties be responsive to the region, supporting tribal engagement in the process. TSF's CEO serves on the oversight committee for this effort.

& ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

A Platform for Action

Restoring Ecosystem
& Community Resiliency
in the Sierra Nevada

Adopted by The Sierra Fund Board of Directors
February 2017



Early this year, TSF proudly announced our new mission: to restore ecosystem and community resiliency in the Sierra Nevada.

CONFERENCE

Elizabeth "Lizzy" Martin as Master of Ceremonies



TSF honored Tribal Secretary for the Nisenan Rancheria, Shelly Covert during our spring Reclaiming the Sierra Conference.

POSTING FISH ADVISORIES



TSF developed a Fish Consumption Advisory Posting Protocol as a tool for organizations in other mine-impacted regions to launch volunteer posting efforts.

RESTORING ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCY

- ♦ **MEADOWS:** This spring we began a meadow restoration project in Plumas County. Working in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the landowner and UC Davis, TSF has designed a baseline monitoring and post-restoration evaluation plan for the ~3,000-acre site. TSF led two field camps where volunteers and CSU, Chico graduate students installed 11 piezometers to monitor shallow subsurface and surface water; collected data on vegetation; surveyed over 25 stream segments; collected water samples; and conducted Wolman Pebble Counts before the first snow of the season.
- ♦ **MINES AND FORESTS:** In 2017, TSF's Science Director began advising two CSU, Chico graduate students on projects to identify and assess hydraulic mines and their features, including debris control dams, in the Tahoe National Forest (TNF). This work involved extensive desktop analysis of LiDAR on USFS land in the Yuba River watershed and coordination with TNF staff for fieldwork to ground-truth mapped features. The project team developed an assessment protocol for site visits, created a framework for nomenclature to be used in the site database and determined a method for prioritizing sites which led to selection of two sites proposed for a joint TSF/TNF project to integrate mine remediation and fuels reduction activities.
- ♦ **FISH:** In order to evaluate volitional fish passage opportunities for spring-run Chinook salmon on the Yuba River, TSF is collecting temperature data to determine where holding habitat exists above Englebright Dam. These data will be analyzed and mapped with existing data to guide plans for recovery of this endangered species.
- ♦ **SUCTION DREDGE MINING:** Our work did not end with the passage of Senate Bill 637 in 2015 which requires miners to obtain water quality permits from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). TSF has monitored the rule-making process and led the campaign to increase awareness of and participation in public hearings to voice support for protection of California's rivers. TSF staff commented at public workshops in both Redding and Sacramento, and submitted extensive written comments to the SWRCB on this subject.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE SIERRA

- ♦ **SIERRA ADVOCACY:** TSF advocated for funding approved in California's 2017/18 budget for two projects that will help protect water quality and abate mercury contamination resulting from historic mining activities. Over \$6 million was awarded for the Nevada Irrigation District's sediment and mercury removal project at Combie Reservoir on the Bear River and over \$8 million was awarded to implement the remediation plan being developed at Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park.
- ♦ **SIERRA INVESTMENT:** In 2017, TSF granted nearly \$65,000 to nonprofit organizations through the generosity of our private donors and funders. In addition, TSF continued to provide fiscal sponsorship to several organizations whose mission and activities compliment and extend our own, and to provide fiscal management for two Department of Water Resources (DWR) grants that fund a variety of water quality and infrastructure improvement projects throughout the Cosumnes, American, Bear and Yuba (CABY) watersheds.

MEADOWS



Our monitoring at Clover Valley is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Sierra Meadows Partnership so that it contributes to a larger regional effort.

ONGOING RESEARCH



TSF Science Director Dr. Carrie Monohan continues to engage students in our projects through her role as adjunct professor at California State University, Chico.

SABBATICAL



TSF CEO Elizabeth "Izzy" Martin returned in September from a three month sabbatical awarded by the California Wellness Foundation.