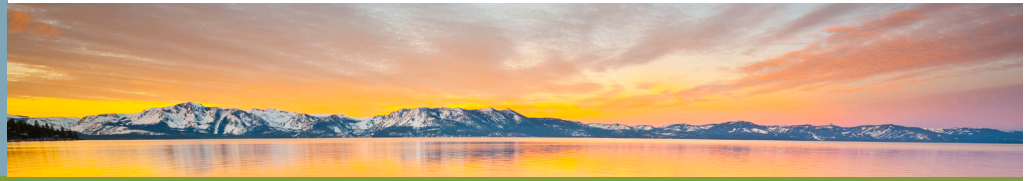




The Sierra Fund's 2022 Accomplishments

Restoring ecosystem and community resiliency



Celebrated our 20th Anniversary



The Sierra Fund celebrated our impressive track record! Over 20 years, the organization attracted over \$100 million in public and private investments; was a critical leader in helping to establish the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, which has to date leveraged over \$120 million in state funding; won a moratorium on suction dredge mining, a practice that pollutes our rivers and streams; and advanced policies and reforms that better protect our health and environment from past mining's toxic legacy. Our evening reception in Sacramento on April 6 appreciated all our donors, legislative partners, fellow conservation leaders, and supporters who made this possible. And we honored retired CEO and leader extraordinaire, Izzy Martin, with a golden pinecone award.

Developed New Approach to Address Wildfire and Mine Remediation

The Sierra Fund is creating an innovative new approach to restore hydraulic mine sites, reduce fuel load to address wildfires, store carbon, and prevent mercury runoff. Currently, fuel load reduction projects avoid thousands of acres of hydraulic mine-impacted areas in the Sierra because of the difficulties assessing these historically impacted sites. The Sierra Fund, in 2022, partnered with Tahoe National Forest to integrate hydraulic mine remediation into fuel load reduction for wildfire protection, piloting a new approach at the Grizzly Creek Mine site. Staff designed and conducted applied research using biochar – a “filter-like” charcoal product made from small-diameter trees. We completed the installation of test plots and conducted rainfall simulations to quantify how effective biochar is at trapping and storing sediment, including particulate-bound mercury, that would otherwise flow off of mine sites during storm events into downstream water sources. This approach also restores soil health and captures carbon – and is cost-effective to do in tandem with the fuel load reduction work.



Partnered with Tribes to Advance Priority Projects



The Sierra Fund partnered with Tribes on some of their priority projects on their ancestral homelands. In prior years we had a series of listening sessions and this year we focused on advancing projects that our Tribal partners requested our time and effort on for fundraising or project design. We continued design and permitting work on the Tribute Trail with our partner California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project (Nisenan) – and have hopes to celebrate completion in 2023. We wrote grants and secured half a million in funding this year for the California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project and the Colfax Todd's Valley Consolidated Tribe for water access improvements and cultural activities, including fuels reduction and native plant propagation.

Trained Restoration Leaders in Nature-Based Solutions to Meadow Restoration



The Sierra Fund is leading efforts to train up restoration practitioners in best practices for restoring degraded meadows. Meadows are critical natural areas that, when healthy, help retain water longer into the season and benefit many species. Meadows can even help slow fires, giving firefighters a better chance of protecting a community (as evidenced in 2021 near Markleeville). Finally, healthy meadows store more carbon per acre than forests – important as we work to avoid catastrophic climate change. In 2022, we were the lead organizer for two region-wide meadow restoration-related training opportunities. We organized two three-day Sierra Meadows Wetland & Riparian Area Monitoring Plan Protocols field trainings (one in Yosemite) and co-convened the first-of-its-kind training on process-based restoration with over 50 tribal members, conservationists, and students attending. One fun element of our nature-based approach is training others on how to install beaver dam analogs (man-made beaver dams) to rewet meadows and restore healthy meadow function. True success is when beaver dam analogs allow willows to regrow, and real beavers show up at that point to take over. Go beavers!

Connected Cities and Counties to Resources to Clean up Abandoned Mine Lands

The Sierra Fund reached out to connect cities and counties to needed clean-up funding for mine-impacted lands, to better protect our health and the environment. We identified the best contacts in cities and counties throughout the region and researched potential brownfields projects related to abandoned mine lands. Abandoned mine brownfields are sites with potential chemical and physical hazards that could be reused or redeveloped if assessed and cleaned up. To support cities and counties in cleaning up brownfields for reuse, The Sierra Fund created a factsheet and webpages to share funding information and other brownfields resources. We helped organize a public meeting with partners in Nevada City and Grass Valley that highlighted resources by the U.S. EPA, and we called and emailed cities and counties in the Sierra to alert them to these resources. We look forward to continuing this work to expand the number of clean-ups that cities and counties take on.

“The Sierra Fund found us when my staff and I were at a crossroads in the remedial process and were concerned about continued funding. The Sierra Fund staff provided us with encouragement and grant information. I found them passionate and experienced, especially when helping small communities. I greatly appreciated their mental and technical support.”

*Yvonne Kimball,
City Manager with the City of Jackson.*

Advocated for Increased State Investments to Scale up Wildfire Protection Work

The increased severity of fire threatens our communities' safety, water supply, wildlife habitat, carbon stores, Native American sacred sites, recreation, and local economies. This year we partnered with Sierra Forest Legacy, Sierra Institute for Communities and the Environment, and American River Conservancy to hire an advocacy team in Sacramento to champion increasing the scale of our response to progressively intense and large wildfires and to incorporate best practices focused on building wildfire resilient ecosystems and communities. We want wildfire prevention efforts to be more

holistic and employ community-scale approaches. As part of this, we championed increasing the state budget allocations for prescribed fire training centers, landscape conservation and improved fire mapping, more funds for a prescribed fire liability fund, and grants for community-scaled wood utilization and ecosystem management. We did not get everything we asked – but we will continue to push for increased investment in smart forest health approaches and fuel treatments that include hydraulic mine remediation.