

# Sierra Nevada Alliance Strategic Plan for January 2017- December 2018

Updated December 2016

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## Orientation to this Plan

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Due to a new director and a shift in priorities and capacity, the Alliance staff and board agreed that the 2014 strategic plan no longer served its purpose as a guiding document for the organization. As a result, the Alliance Executive Director, Jenny Hatch, worked with Alliance staff and contractors to develop a new plan to guide priorities for the next two years. This, the 2017-2018 strategic plan, will be replaced before the end of 2018 by a longer-term strategic plan developed after completing a comprehensive capacity assessment of the organization. This capacity assessment should include structured opportunities to survey, interview and meet with Alliance staff, board and stakeholders in order to identify Alliance strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

This 2017-2018 strategic plan builds on and does not change the longstanding mission, vision, and core values of the Alliance. Its creation was informed by taking into account existing Alliance resources – including finances and staff capacity – and considering the role of the Alliance in the context of current challenges and opportunities to conservation in the Sierra Nevada. The document was also informed by considering the roles played by other Sierra-wide conservation organizations and agencies (Sierra Business Council, Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Sierra Fund), and identifying roles and resources unique to the Alliance.

This 2017-2018 strategic plan identifies the core strategy, background, future vision, and the goals and objectives for nine core programs. The strategic plan is accompanied by a workplan (see the table in Appendix A expanding on the goals and objectives listed below) that identifies the actions, people, products, funds, and time frame for each program objective. For each of the core programs the plan describes a long term vision of success for the program area. This vision in many cases is unrealistic for the two year life of this plan but provides a guidepost for strategic decision-making as the Alliance allocates scarce resources. This strategic plan also captures the most important information about the Alliance as an organization: the history of its creation, its mission, its vision for the Sierra, and the core values that guide Alliance work and culture.

## Alliance History, Mission, Vision and Values

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### HISTORY

In 1991, Tom Knudson wrote a five part series of articles from an eight-month investigation for the Sacramento Bee called “The Sierra in Peril.” This report chronicled a myriad of problems: polluted air, dying forests, poisoned rivers, vanishing wildlife, eroding soil, and rapid-fire development. This series won a Pulitzer Prize.

These articles made the conservation community aware that there was no unified voice speaking out for the protection of the Sierra. Thus, the Environment Now foundation joined by other groups and foundations sponsored a conference called Sierra Now. In preparation, a number of task forces were convened to research, assess, and develop environmental solutions to Sierra problems. The final recommendations from the task forces were presented to 450 attendees at the Sierra Now conference.

One of the goals of the Sierra Now process was to create and launch a new organization to ‘speak out’ for the Sierra. That organization founded from this was the Sierra Nevada Alliance. Based on the results of the task forces and conference, conservation leaders reached the inevitable conclusion that environmental organizations must begin working together toward a common Sierra goal, share their talents, and create expertise where none exists.

The new organization was to emphasize grassroots activism and be based in the Sierra, with its primary focus being coordination of the conservation efforts in the Sierra. The mandate for the new Alliance in the fall of 1992 was:

- Be the unified environmental voice for Sierra activists at the regional and national level
- Provide technical, legal, and organizational support for environmental partners
- Pursue the recommendations made by the Sierra Now Task Forces
- Educate the public about the Sierra’s environmental problems
- Provide models and proposals for better environmental management in the Sierra
- Publicize the environmental degradation happening in the Sierra Nevada in the media
- Serve as the consensus builder for Sierra environmental advocates
- Help its environmental partners be more effective in advocating change to protect and rehabilitate the Sierra Nevada
- Build coalitions between the public and private sectors in order to facilitate the creation of sustainable environmental policies

In 1993, the Sierra Nevada Alliance was founded as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Laurel Ames was hired as the first Executive Director and served in this position until 2002. The first office was the dining room table of Laurel Ames.

The founding board of directors included: Andy Bartlett, Jane Baxter, Linda Blum, Joan Boothe, Peter Brussard, John Buckley, Harriet Burgess, David Edelson, Dan Everson, Warren Haines, John Kipling, Andrea Lawrence, Rick Luskin, Patricia Malberg, Dean Malley, Erin Noel, Joan Reiss, Rob Schaeffer, Marjorie Sill, Kathy Tierney, Frannie Waid, and Kimery Wiltshire.

## MISSION

To protect and restore Sierra Nevada lands, water and wildlife, and to support the health, vibrancy and resilience of the region’s rural and urban communities. We do this by strengthening the work of people and organizations committed to the environmental integrity of the Sierra, and by supporting individuals and groups on region-wide efforts consistent with our mission and core values.

## ALLIANCE’S VISION FOR THE SIERRA

The Alliance holds a vision of the Sierra that will benefit both natural and human communities, with clean air and water, healthy and resilient forests and ecosystems, wild and scenic rivers, and abundant wildlife. Energy and transportation systems will be efficient and increasingly reliant on renewable technologies, with aesthetically pleasing networks of bikeable, walkable pathways, and practical public transportation options.

Our towns, each descriptively unique, will be vibrant and sustainable, with defined edges surrounded by healthy open space and wildlands. Our communities will be beautiful and clean, with numerous community gardens, parks, and playgrounds allowing for many recreational activities and creating spaces that lift human spirits. There will be high levels of goodwill and mutual respect by all parts of our communities.

Our community leaders will be innovative and strive to implement models of sustainability. Inevitable differences throughout the region will be increasingly managed through collaborative, consensus-seeking processes that emphasize resolving issues in ways that are fair, wise, stable, and efficient. Our county and city general plans, water and forest plans, and other resource management strategies will increasingly reflect these ideals.

Outside the Sierra, our state and nation will value and support increasing the health of our communities, protection and restoration of our environment, and sustainable use of our natural resources.

## CORE VALUES

- **Inclusiveness.** The Sierra Nevada Alliance believes that any individual, agency, group, business, tribe or other entity that wishes to work to protect and restore natural resources of the Sierra should be included at the table. This holds true for any individual regardless of race, income, gender, sexual preference, religion, etc.
- **Power of one and power of many.** The Alliance believes that to protect and restore the Sierra Nevada for future generations it will take individual action, as well as collective action. Individuals do make a difference in their daily lives. Groups do make a difference saving Sierra special places. The Alliance believes that, in addition to personal action and local organizing, combining efforts across the region is needed. Action on all levels is effective. Hence, the Alliance works to build the capacity of individuals and groups, and works to unite efforts to make regional impact.
- **Sustainability and intergenerational equity.** We believe that we have a responsibility to future generations to provide them the same beauty, resources, inspiration and access to the Sierra as the current generation enjoys. It is not acceptable to exhaust resources or take actions that limit future generations’ opportunities to experience the full richness of this amazing range of light. Hence, we need to understand the limitations of our resources, the ability for species to continue, and what actions we must take to sustain the qualities that we love so that future generations can appreciate them as we do today.

- **Tangible results.** The Alliance believes that we must act to achieve tangible results and that a vision for perfection must not get in the way of achieving realistic, interim changes that lead to our goals. We must work to find solutions that facilitate positive changes. The best should guide the way to the good, but should not be the enemy of the good.
- **Strategic applications of power to influence change.** We believe that all members of a community have a voice in the future of the Sierra. We believe in collaboration to create community and find win-win solutions. We also believe that when a member of the community is shut out or their voice is ignored, that they have the right to use non-violent means to build their power and get a place at the table. Methods such as litigation, nonviolent protest, and direct advocacy are appropriate tools to achieve change and ensure your voice is heard and respected when other options are not effective.
- **Focus on solutions.** The Alliance is solution-focused. We believe it is important to highlight problems and degradation to the Sierra, but it is equally important to present possible solutions when presenting those problems. When faced only with problems, people tend to become overwhelmed, discouraged and hopeless. When presented possible solutions to these problems, they are more likely to engage. We seek to create solutions.
- **Challenge ideas, not people.** The Alliance’s primary base is conservation groups, but all voices are important and part of the solution. While we may disagree with particular viewpoints on a given issue, we continue to respect the people behind those viewpoints. At the end of the day, we are all part of one community. Respecting others is important to creating true solutions in the long-term.
- **Mutually beneficial partnerships.** The Alliance strives to benefit and support all member groups, and recognizes that the Sierra region and the Alliance benefit from Member Group efforts and expertise.
- **Don’t transfer problems.** We don’t transfer our problems elsewhere. We look for solutions that work.

## Programs and Core Strategies – Summary

The Alliance achieves its mission through six outward facing programs (A – F) that are supported by three internal programs (G-I) comprising the Alliance’s infrastructure. The graphic below illustrates these basic relationships.



### A. Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP)

- Support conservation and restoration programs and projects through a Sierra-wide AmeriCorps placement program that advances the mission of the Alliance as well as the missions and goals of member groups and partners that host AmeriCorps members.

### B. Alliance Member Groups

- Build and steward a thriving member group base that can be mobilized to act as a unified voice for positive environmental policies, programs and projects in the Sierra, and that demonstrates the principal of stronger together.

### C. Regional Climate Change

- Engage and support efforts to adopt and implement exemplary sustainable city and regional plans across the Sierra. Exemplary sustainable plans work to protect and restore Sierra waters, lands, wildlife and communities and incorporate climate change adaptation principles, while meeting or exceeding the most aggressive statewide or national greenhouse gas emission reduction legislation.

### D. Sierra Nevada Science

- Ensure that the Alliance’s work, and the work of member groups, is informed by the best available science.

**E. Sierra Awareness and Appreciation**

- Create lifelong advocates for protection of the Sierra Nevada through activities that engage, educate and build appreciation for Sierra resources, lands and wildlife.

**F. Sierra Nevada Advocacy**

- Organize and mobilize the conservation community to 1) pass plans, policies and legislation that protect and restore Sierra Nevada ecosystems and improve the health and vibrancy of Sierra Nevada communities and 2) confront and defeat threats to Sierra Nevada ecosystems and communities.

**G. Development and Individual Membership**

- Meet the Alliance’s financial needs through diversified funding sources and build a sustainable membership financially committed to the Alliance’s long-term well-being.

**H. Board Governance and Organizational Leadership**

- Support exceptional Board governance and organizational leadership that advances the Alliance’s mission and long-term sustainability.

**I. Finance and Operations**

- Use best practices to ensure sound fiscal management with strong internal controls and oversight, and create an organizational culture that supports staff in fulfilling the Alliance’s mission.

## Program Goals and Objectives

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### A. SIERRA NEVADA AMERICORPS PARTNERSHIP (SNAP)

#### Core Strategy

Support conservation and restoration programs and projects through a Sierra-wide AmeriCorps placement program that advances the mission of the Alliance as well as the missions and goals of member groups and partners that host AmeriCorps members.

#### Background

The Sierra Nevada AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP) was initiated in 2007 as part of an effort to provide Alliance member groups and partners with qualified staff at subsidized rates to support their watershed programs. The SNAP program has made a quantifiable impact on the watersheds of the Sierra Nevada. Most years, there are more applications from organizations to participate as host sites than there are slots available. In 2015, a SNAP Member from Eastern Sierra Land Trust was awarded the Catherine Milton AmeriCorps Member of the Year for her outstanding service. Since 2007, 284 SNAP Members have restored more than 2,500 watershed acres, monitored more than 2,000 sites, educated more than 165,000 individuals, recruited more than 33,000 volunteers and contributed more than 475,000 hours of service. SNAP host sites have hired 68 individuals on a temporary, part time or full time basis, keeping dozens of highly educated, well trained conservationists in the Sierra. Today SNAP places 28 AmeriCorps members with more than a dozen conservation agencies and organizations to conduct watershed restoration and monitoring, watershed education, and volunteer recruitment and support. Members serve for 11 months.

#### Vision for the Future

The Alliance's federally funded AmeriCorps program places premier volunteers with organizations and agencies throughout the Sierra to engage in meaningful conservation and restoration work that benefits Sierra ecosystems and communities. Organizations, agencies local officials, and key decisions-makers throughout the range know about the Alliance's AmeriCorps program and recognize the program as an important contribution from the Sierra Nevada Alliance to the conservation community. Alliance AmeriCorps members strengthen the effectiveness and build the capacity of Alliance member groups and partners. Feedback from Alliance AmeriCorps members indicates high-levels of satisfaction with their positions. Cash match donations more than cover program expenses and help ensure the program remains affordable for interested host sites. The Alliance regularly hosts two AmeriCorps members and provides them with appropriate workplans, on-site training, supervision and mentorship opportunities. In addition, the Alliance manages a SierraCorps of interns that implement on-the-ground conservation projects such as trail building, meadow and stream restoration and invasive plant removal. SierraCorps members assist in advocacy, coordination, fundraising, and outreach efforts that strengthen the SNAP program and the efforts of the Alliance and their partners.

#### 2017-2018 Goals and Objectives

- 1 Goal: Achieve or exceed all outputs and outcomes as stated in SNAP's yearly California Volunteers (CV) contract in the performance measure categories: 1) watershed restoration and assessment, 2) environmental education and outreach, 3) volunteer recruitment and support, 4) AmeriCorps member development, and 5) resource attainment for environmental non-profit organizations and agencies throughout the Sierra.
  - 1.1 Recruit, hire, train, mentor and support at least 28 SNAP members to achieve yearly SNAP program goals.

- 1.2 Follow all California Volunteers (CV) and Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) rules, regulations, policies and procedures to ensure further funding of the SNAP program.
- 1.3 Ensure the SNAP program has funding to cover program expenses not covered by AmeriCorps funding. Additional funding may include cash match, public and private grants, event and individual donor fundraising and other funding as available.
- 1.4 Keep SNAP affordable for partners.
- 1.5 Recruit, screen, select and train SNAP host sites to achieve program goals and ensure SNAP members have a positive experience with SNAP and the AmeriCorps program.
- 2 Goal: Increase SNAP funding opportunities, build SNAP pride and culture, and attract the most qualified SNAP applicants by increasing the visibility and profile of SNAP work.
  - 2.1 Increase the profile and significance of the coordinated conservation projects undertaken by SNAP members each year and utilize marketing and messaging tools to broadcast activity/project success.
  - 2.2 Develop public relations materials and an outreach plan and schedule for the SNAP program that focuses on 1) describing SNAP program and member achievements for the Sierra Nevada and 2) recruiting host sites where SNAP members can have the greatest impact.
- 3 Goal: Develop full-time positions for two in-house AmeriCorps members.
  - 3.1 Establish a workplan and training plan, as well as appropriate supervision and mentorship in order to successfully host two AmeriCorps members (pair with the launch and/or build out of Program E, *Sierra Appreciation and Awareness*).

## **B. ALLIANCE MEMBER GROUPS**

### **Core Strategy**

Build and steward a thriving member group base that can be mobilized to act as a unified voice for positive environmental policies, programs and projects in the Sierra, and that demonstrates the principal of stronger together.

### **Background**

The strength and success of our ability to achieve the Alliance’s mission – to protect and restore Sierra Nevada lands, water and wildlife, and to support the health, vibrancy and resilience of the region’s rural and urban communities – requires strategic, stable, coordinated and effective member groups that represent the variety of local and regional organizations and groups working on environmental issues throughout the range. In addition, the larger the Alliance’s membership base, the more legislative power the Alliance is able to exert by tapping into its network. To shore up a base of member groups that can act as a true alliance for positive environmental change, the Alliance must: 1) ensure mutually beneficial relationships between the Alliance and member groups, 2) expand the diversity of organizations that compose the member base, and 3) ensure member groups are engaged in actions aligned with the Alliance’s mission and vision. Each of these requirements is discussed in more detail below.

First, informal conversations with some present and past member groups indicate that some member groups do not recognize value in their membership either because a) the Alliance does not provide services they need to successfully implement their mission and vision and/or b) they do not recognize how the alliance of member groups helps achieve a stronger and more coordinated voice that leads to better environmental outcomes for the region. To increase member group participation, the Alliance must ensure it is providing services that are of value to member groups – including services that help them achieve success on the issues of greatest importance to

them; and also to ensure that member groups see and feel how their participation as an alliance supports improved environmental protection and restoration throughout the region.

Second, the success and effectiveness of the Alliance requires reaching out to a more diverse set of organizations than have traditionally composed Alliance membership. Historically, most groups that identify as transportation, social justice, public health or tourism organizations have not been sought for Alliance membership. However, in the last decade the relationship between these sectors and conservation success has become intricately linked. It is essential that the Alliance seek out these groups as partners, and, if the alignment of interests is appropriate, bring such groups on board as member groups. By building a network of member groups that is representative of the multiple interests that stand to benefit due to improved environmental protections and policies for the Sierra, the Alliance dramatically increases the possibility for positive environmental change.

Third, a key problem the Alliance has confronted in the past are member groups engaged in local environmental issues that are in conflict with another member group's position on a particular issue or, that do not align well with the Alliance's mission, long-term vision or values. This dissonance has created confusion about the Alliance's role with respect to member group support and has detracted from the Alliance's ability to act as a unified voice for positive environmental change. To improve alignment among and between member groups the Alliance can: a) improve screening criteria to ensure member group applicants are engaged in conservation and community actions aligned with the Alliance's mission, vision and values; b) better educate existing member groups about current best practices supported by the Alliance as they pertain to environment protection, restoration and community development; and c) help member groups achieve success with strategies that do not risk confusing or compromising the Alliance mission, vision or values. For example, it may not serve the Alliance to send out action alerts to its network on behalf of any particular member group if the action does not strongly align with the Alliance's mission and vision and/or current advocacy focus (see Program F: *Sierra Nevada Advocacy*).

### **Vision for the Future**

By 2019 the Alliance has 100 or more active member groups utilizing Alliance resources and services to increase their effectiveness, sharing information amongst one another, coordinating their conservation efforts, lending support to region-wide environmental campaigns and sending at least one representative to the Alliance bi-annual conference. These member groups represent a diversity of organizations that stand to benefit due to pro-environmental policies and programs enacted in the Sierra, and include organizations and agencies that work on land, water and wildlife issues; as well as organizations and agencies that focus on alternative transportation, public health, social justice, climate change, and geo-tourism.

### **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Establish an Alliance member group base composed of at least 100 member groups who work on environmental and community issues aligned with the Alliance's mission, vision and values.
  - 1.1 Attract a diversity of member groups representative of the multi-faceted approaches to achievement of the Alliance's mission.
  - 1.2 Clarify and communicate Alliance member group benefits to attract new and returning members.
  - 1.3 Execute an annual member group renewal campaign to recruit best fit member groups.
  - 1.4 Improve member group unity, friendships, resource sharing and fun.
- 2 Goal: Provide a comprehensive suite of useful resources to member groups to build their effectiveness and stability.
  - 2.1 Provide member groups with news, resources, training, and funding opportunities.

- 2.2 Act as a central hub for community engagement, volunteerism, outreach, activism, and information exchange concerning the Sierra Nevada (see Program E, *Sierra Awareness and Appreciation*).
- 3 Goal: Empower member groups to lead and achieve success on the environmental issues most important to them.
  - 3.1 Build staff expertise and capacity to assist member groups with organizational development and stability, with conservation campaign management and with outreach and education tools.
  - 3.2 Create and establish organized and accessible online access to advocacy tools (campaign guides, petitions, email templates, etc...) specifically designed for conservation efforts in the Sierra Nevada.
  - 3.3 Provide in-depth campaign consultation support to select member groups (*pending staff and resource capacity*).

## C. REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE

### Core Strategy

Engage and support efforts to adopt and implement exemplary sustainable city and regional plans across the Sierra. Exemplary sustainable plans work to protect and restore Sierra waters, lands, wildlife and communities and incorporate climate change adaptation principles, while meeting or exceeding the most aggressive statewide or national greenhouse gas emission reduction legislation.

### Background

The Sierra Nevada Alliance has a long history of supporting sustainable planning. Since 1998 Alliance staff have actively partnered with member groups and allies to develop and implement local and regional resources plans that serve as models for a resilient and thriving Sierra region that successfully faces economic, environmental and societal challenges, including climate change. Specifically this has included working with community groups to create and adopt county-wide general plans based on smart-growth objectives and principles – including the protection of open space; participating in efforts to develop model Sustainable Community Strategies (required under passage of SB 375 to reduce GHG emissions) – including by participating with the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative and supporting the Fresno Sustainable Communities Strategy (the only SCS involving the Sierra foothills). Outside of land use planning, the Alliance has tracked, supported and helped create robust Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Plans and has tracked and supported efforts to develop and adopt national forest plans that demonstrate consideration of its resources in the face of climate change. On a more local level, the Alliance’s Sustainable Community Strategies program focused on individual and community-based actions to create a more sustainable Sierra including through thoughtful landscaping, green stormwater management infrastructure and through energy efficiency partnership and outreach. Sierra communities often lack the resources (funding), capacity and expertise to explore and attempt innovative solutions to growth and development pressures, and to increasing demands for energy, water, wastewater and sewer needs.

The Alliance is excited to continue its involvement in smart land use planning, community development and community sustainability efforts. The Alliance believes that, given the anti-environmental position of our national government post the 2016 election, ramping up local and regional efforts to build more resilient communities that reflect concern for and value of the natural environment is more important than ever.

## **Vision for the Future**

Sierra county and regional resource plans promote smart land use, incorporate sustainable water management practices, aggressively reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change to ensure resilience of Sierra communities, watersheds, and wildlife. There are multiple exemplarily sustainable regional and community-wide plans in seven geographic regions of the Sierra. These model resource plans incorporate climate change adaptation principles and/or are consistent with or exceed the most aggressive greenhouse gas emission reduction targets identified in state or national legislation. In addition, every major community in the Sierra Nevada has made a commitment and is actively working to implement a plan to transition to 100% renewable energy sources by 2050.

## **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Facilitate business and community commitments to 100% renewable energy goals.
  - 1.1 Establish a strong working partnership with the Climate Reality Project.
  - 1.2 Actively work with at least 3 communities to adopt and begin to implement plans to transition to 100% renewable energy.
  - 1.3 Build staff expertise as it relates to coordinating commitments to 100% renewable energy.
  - 1.4 Export potential model policies and strategies to other communities in the region.
- 2 Goal: Coordinate and provide opportunities for member groups and partners to effectively provide strategic and science-based input to important regional plans including: upcoming forest plan revisions (starting with the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forest Plans), IRWMs and the Sierra Water Workgroup, creation and implementation of Sustainable Community Strategies and county and city-wide general plans and climate action plans.
  - 2.1 Track upcoming forest plan revisions in partnership and with leadership provided by the Sierra Forest Legacy.
  - 2.2 Track IRWM implementation and needs in partnership with the Sierra Water Working group.
  - 2.3 Track upcoming and in progress general planning efforts with local land use groups and regional partners including the Local Government Commission, Climate Plan, Sierra Business Council and other community development savvy organizations.
  - 2.4 Track regional habitat planning efforts – including development and implementation of the Placer County Habitat Conservation Plan and any other emerging formal or informal regional habitat conservation plans with geography in the Sierra.

## **D. SIERRA NEVADA SCIENCE**

### **Core Strategy**

Ensure that the Alliance’s work, and the work of member groups, is informed by the best available science such that the Alliance is recognized as a dependable source of scientific information about key conservation issues in the Sierra Nevada.

### **Background**

As an organization that aims to be an agent of positive change for Sierra ecosystems and communities, it is critical that the Alliance represent current and best available science. Anything less undermines the Alliance’s credibility. The Alliance relies on our member groups to help implement the Alliance’s mission, and thus it is important that the actions and decisions of member groups are also informed by the best available science.

Alliance board and staff believe the Alliance has the reputation as an organization informed by best available science. Its numerous publications reflect the organization’s preference for well cited facts and figures and for the

most up-to-date scientific information. As an example: the first edition of the Alliance’s climate change toolkit includes resources to help communities not only mitigate, but adapt to climate change. That the toolkit was released in 2008, long before adapting to climate change became a popularly recognized concept for the natural resource community, is evidence of the Alliance’s informed and forward thinking approach to environmental issues and science.

### **Vision for the Future**

The Alliance is recognized by environmental agencies, public officials and experts throughout the region as a dependable source of scientific information about multiple Sierra issues. The Alliance is frequently tapped by individuals and organizations seeking resources or support for various efforts related to land, water and wildlife conservation, and sustainable community development. The Alliance website is an organized portal of information about key Sierra resource issues. Alliance publications provide information that is helpful to agencies, organizations and decision-makers charged with caretaking Alliance resources and communities. Alliance staff are aware of the most significant ecosystem planning efforts in the region and respected by those individuals and organizations leading such efforts.

### **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Author, compile and provide access to the best available science about key environmental issues in the Sierra Nevada.
  - 1.1 Author or update, as needed, at least one Alliance publications around hot topic issues or issues that lack attention or information.
  - 1.2 Provide online access via the Alliance website to up-to-date and best available resources for information, institutions and experts working on Sierra-specific conservations issues.
  - 1.3 Promote and share science and policy pertinent to member groups’ interests and actions.
- 2 Goal: Build lasting coalitions and partnerships to share scientific information and promote research about Sierra-wide issues.
  - 2.1 Establish partnerships and regular communications with academic experts, research institutions, agencies and other organizations working on Sierra conservation issues to stay abreast of the newest information and to be able to point member groups seeking information to the appropriate resource.
  - 2.2 Stay engaged and at the table with organizations and agencies involved in region-wide conservation issues and projects including those associated with: climate change, forest health, watershed health and community development and smart growth. These efforts include: Sierra Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Partnership (Sierra CAMP); USDA Forest Planning, and Integrated Regional Watershed Management Planning.

## **E. SIERRA AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION**

### **Core Strategy**

Create lifelong advocates for protection of the Sierra Nevada through activities that engage, educate and build appreciation for Sierra resources, lands and wildlife.

### **Background**

The Alliance has a long-history of hosting informal events for member groups and donors; and for conservation-minded citizens living in the Truckee/Tahoe area. These have included events like the South Lake Tahoe Wild & Scenic Film Festival, green happy hours, wildflower walks, full moon paddles and winter parties. While fun, the events were often a side-project of donor development and outreach, or simply stand-alone activities not

necessarily related to an Alliance program. Despite their lack of cohesion, these events embodied the culture of the Alliance – hip, fun, friendly, relaxed and informative. Such events often attracted citizens not otherwise aware of the Alliance and expanded awareness to burgeoning conservation issues in the region. Building on the success of these ad hoc events, the Alliance is launching a Sierra Awareness and Appreciation program. The program formalizes Alliance activities related to outreach and education and unifies the purpose for such events with a core strategy and goals. By formalizing the program the Alliance can seek funding to support its efforts to educate Sierra residents and visitors to the region. The program also creates the opportunity to build the Alliance’s database of contacts and attract new individuals to the conservation movement. In addition, the program creates the opportunity for the Alliance to seek, establish partnerships with and support organizations throughout the Sierra Nevada that offer events and activities focused on awareness and appreciation of Sierra resources. Ultimately, much of the protection and restoration of the Sierra Nevada lies with California voters, not just with Sierra residents. By proactively establishing a program that aims to increase appreciation and awareness of the region among both Sierra residents as well as residents of the Central Valley and coast – the Sierra Nevada Alliance creates the opportunity to add people power to the Sierra Advocacy Program, and improves the Alliance’s ability to successfully fulfill its mission.

### **Vision for the Future**

The Alliance is viewed as the conservation organization for the Sierra Nevada, much as the League to Save Lake Tahoe is viewed as the conservation organization at Lake Tahoe. The Alliance network includes individuals and organizations throughout the state who tune into Alliance generated media to learn about experiential and educational events hosted by the Alliance and by Alliance member organizations and partners. The Alliance has created and/or forged partnerships with youth-oriented education and outreach programs to increase opportunities for youth from throughout the Central Valley and Bay Area to travel to the Sierra, and to participate in educational events about Sierra lands, water and wildlife.

### **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Make the Alliance the central hub for community engagement, volunteerism, outreach, activism, and information exchange concerning the Sierra Nevada.
  - 1.1 Regularly host and/or help promote events that highlight Sierra Conservation issues and create opportunities for like-minded conservation activists to come together.
  - 1.2 Make the Alliance office an inclusive and welcoming resource for member groups in the area.
- 2 Goal: Lead or facilitate opportunities for Sierra Nevada residents to: engage with Sierra lands, water and wildlife; learn more about key environmental issues in the Sierra; meet other conservation-minded citizens and organizations; and learn about important environmental issues in their specific geographic area.
  - 2.1 Organize and/or host at least three fun Sierra Nevada educational activities focused on sharing information and attracting attention on current hot conservation topics.
  - 2.2 Seek-out and provide support to existing Sierra programs that offer educational and experiential opportunities to Sierra residents.
  - 2.3 Partner with member groups to host monthly “green happy hours” throughout communities in the Sierra Nevada.
- 3 Goal: Lead or facilitate opportunities for urban-area residents (including from Sacramento, the Bay Area and the Central Valley) to engage with Sierra lands, water and wildlife; and to learn about key environmental issues in the Sierra, and about the relationship of Sierra ecosystem services to all of California.
  - 3.1 Organize and/or host at least three fun Sierra Nevada educational activities in California urban areas – with a focus on Sacramento, the Bay Area and cities in the Central Valley.
  - 3.2 Seek out and provide support to existing Sierra programs that bring people to the Sierra for educational and experiential purposes.

- 3.3 Create a youth-outreach program that connects youth from urban areas – including Sacramento, the Bay Area and the Central Valley – to opportunities to explore Sierra landscapes and to learn about its resources, wildlife and lands.

## **F. SIERRA NEVADA ADVOCACY**

### **Core Strategy**

Organize and mobilize the conservation community to 1) adopt plans, policies and legislation that protect and restore Sierra Nevada ecosystems and improve the health and vibrancy of Sierra Nevada communities and 2) confront and defeat threats to Sierra Nevada ecosystems and communities.

### **Background**

The Sierra Nevada range supplies 65 percent of California’s water, almost 50 percent of its timber, and supports some of the most biologically rich landscapes in the United States, but it receives only paltry amounts – historically as little as 1 percent – of state funding for conservation. Currently no single organization works to coordinate and mobilize large portions of the Sierra conservation community to advance environmentally-oriented plans, policies and legislation and secure funding. And while existing organizations including the Sierra Business Council, Sierra Fund, Sierra Forest Legacy and Sierra Nevada Conservancy often work on policy issues, they rarely work as a coordinated and unified advocacy force.

Campaigns channel group power by focusing on a concrete goal. The Alliance’s mission and structure are well positioned to build strong and successful grassroots campaigns for plans, policies and legislation that benefit Sierra ecosystems and communities, and to quickly mobilize in the event of plans, proposals or projects that are clearly misaligned with the Alliance’s mission (e.g. the creation of a dam, sharp cuts in funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, passage of forest plans based on poor science). The Alliance was active and successful in this role as grassroots mobilizers during efforts to create the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, but has since organized its network around very few region-wide actions. The Sierra Nevada Advocacy program would renew this focus by developing strong grassroots campaigns to develop and advocate for plans, policies and legislation that address challenges, and provide opportunities, to restore and protect Sierra lands and waterways, and support Sierra communities. Campaign strategies deployed would focus on unifying and mobilizing member groups, partner organizations and concerned individuals throughout the Sierra Nevada and California to raise awareness of, and generate support for, Sierra specific environmental issues among regional, state and national representatives – including county supervisors, state senators and assembly members, and national house and senate representatives.

The staff and board of the Alliance have spoken with member groups and partners who have expertise in this area and have received widespread encouragement to develop the Sierra Nevada Advocacy program. The program would leverage the existing legislative work undertaken by partner organizations (including the Sierra Business Council and Sierra Nevada Conservancy) and, as appropriate, support their efforts by lending Alliance grassroots organizing and advocacy power. Campaigns undertaken by the Sierra Nevada Advocacy program may include efforts to advance plans, policies and legislation related to improving forest health, protecting headwaters, restoring high Sierra meadows, protecting climate refugia, improving regional transportation and securing funding for a wide variety of environmental restoration and community development projects. The Alliance will also be prepared to launch defensive grassroots campaigns in the event plans, policies or legislation are proposed that are in clear conflict with the Alliance’s vision and mission.

## **Vision for the Future**

Through the Alliance’s Sierra Nevada Advocacy program new opportunities for important ecosystem restoration and conservation work have emerged, and Sierra communities are able to advance planning and implementation of programs and projects to increase their vibrancy and resilience. The Sierra Nevada Alliance and partners are able to definitively point to a relative increase in state and or federal resources to the Sierra for water, wildlife and land protection and restoration. Sound science that is supported by member groups and the conservation community is used to inform forest planning and watershed protection efforts. In addition, local, state and federal representatives from Sierra communities identify the Alliance as a practical partner able to support their efforts to increase the economic resilience and sustainability of Sierra communities in ways that preserve and highlight the region’s landscapes, water sources, recreation potential and wildlife.

## **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Create the infrastructure and capacity to launch and manage effective, Alliance led, grassroots campaigns at the county, state and national levels.
  - 1.1 Secure staff and funding.
  - 1.2 Update and expand network of stakeholders/supporters.
  - 1.3 Identify and install, as necessary, appropriate marketing and messaging tools.
  - 1.4 Build in-house expertise to ensure campaign themes, strategies, tactics and timelines are relevant, timely and informed.
- 2 Goal: Identify and launch one to three clear campaigns for the 2017 and 2018 legislative seasons that each have a concrete goal.
  - 2.1 Select campaigns and campaign goals and identify the theory of change associated with each campaign.
  - 2.2 Launch and adaptively manage chosen campaigns.
  - 2.3 Communicate Alliance campaign priorities for the upcoming legislative seasons to member groups, partners and other Alliance stakeholders.
- 3 Goal: Create a political landscape conducive to supporting and implementing pro-environment policies.
  - 3.1 Build relationship with elected officials and decision makers at the federal, state, regional and local levels to champion Alliance advocacy campaigns.

## **G. DEVELOPMENT AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP**

### **Core Strategy**

Meet the Alliance’s financial needs through diversified funding sources and build a sustainable membership financially committed to the Alliance’s mission and long-term well-being.

### **Background**

The Alliance is composed of member groups as well as individual members. Any financial donor to the Alliance is considered an individual member and Alliance ally. In the past, the Alliance has employed a full-time Development Director able to concentrate solely on building relationships with existing Alliance donors and funders and cultivating Alliance new members. Currently, Alliance staff undertakes such development tasks – including outreach to member groups, major donors, foundations and other funders. Alliance funding is stable, but operations are restricted with limited unrestricted revenue and cash flow. With a new permanent Executive Director and a focus on writing and raising diversified funding for a refreshed strategic direction it is promising that the organization will get back to a place of abundance and productivity outside of the SNAP program.

In addition, the organization has the opportunity to refresh its brand and, with strategic and targeted communication and development materials, renew latent individual membership, cultivate new donors and foundations, and market to new geographic areas – including renewing targeted outreach to urban areas.

### **Vision for the Future**

The Alliance’s funding sources represent a diversified mix of investors including individual and group memberships, private foundations and state and federal grants. In addition, the Alliance receives regular significant charitable and end-of-life donations. The organization has a reserve fund to allow for a year’s worth of operations funding and has set up an endowment fund with the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation. All donors are excited about Alliance programming and enthusiastic about their participation in helping achieve program goals. Donors regularly receive information about Sierra Nevada Alliance programs and about progress towards goal achievements and other definitive outcomes.

### **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Develop a two-year development plan based on well-researched funding needs to execute the goals associated with each of the Alliance’s programs, and taking into account existing Alliance resources.
  - 1.1 Set quantifiable and time-specific fundraising goals for the Alliance as a whole as well as for each Alliance program.
  - 1.2 Develop a budget of costs associated with the fundraising campaign including financial, staff time and advertising.
  - 1.3 Create an inventory of all existing Alliance assets – assets being all the attributes of the Alliance that donors may deem worthy of support.
  - 1.4 Develop fundraising messaging and talking points, and ensure staff and board are well equipped with key points to highlight.
  - 1.5 Prepare a detailed list of prospects and of tactics to accomplish the fundraising goal, and pair it with a timeline for execution.

## **H. BOARD GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

### **Core Strategy**

Support exceptional Board governance and organizational leadership that advances the Alliance’s mission and long-term sustainability.

### **Background**

The Alliance is governed by an 11 member Board of Directors. The Board’s directive is to support the work of the Alliance by providing leadership, governance and oversight. Day to day operations of the Alliance are led by the Executive Director, as appointed by the Board. Board members are selected through active nominations and election participation by Alliance member groups and Board members to serve three year terms and are eligible for re-appointment following the conclusion of their term for up to two consecutive terms. Board meetings are held quarterly and are complimented by Board committee meetings as needed.

Alliance Board responsibilities include:

- Serving as a trusted advisor to the Executive Director in the development and implementation of the Alliance’s strategic plan.
- Reviewing outcomes and metrics created for evaluating programmatic impact and regularly measuring Alliance performance and effectiveness using those metrics.

- Reviewing agendas and supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings.
- Approving the Alliance’s annual budget, audit reports, and material business decisions.
- Being informed of, and meeting all, legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the Alliance.
- Contributing to an annual performance evaluation of the Executive Director.
- Assisting the Executive Director in identifying and recruiting other Board members.
- Partnering with the Executive Director and other Board members to ensure that board resolutions are carried out.
- Serving on committees or task forces and taking on special assignments.
- Representing the Alliance to stakeholders; acting as an ambassador for the organization.
- Ensuring Alliance’s commitment to a diverse board and staff that reflect the member groups it serves.

### **Vision for the Future**

The Alliance is governed by a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors, each member of which is passionate about the Alliance and has achieved demonstrated capability as a leader in their work outside the Alliance board. The Board successfully executes basic oversight responsibilities, and also provides leadership as it relates to strategy, fundraising and building community support. Each member of the Board of Directors makes the Alliance a philanthropic priority and makes annual gifts that reflect that priority (commensurate with their capacity) such that the Alliance can credibly solicit contributions from foundations, organizations and individuals.

### **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Develop and maintain a Board of Directors that is able to successfully execute basic oversight responsibilities, and also provide leadership as it relates to strategy, fundraising and building community support.
  - 1.1 Ensure that regular Board meetings are well planned and attended for maximum efficiency.
  - 1.2 Plan for, initiate and complete a comprehensive capacity assessment of the Alliance that includes a thorough evaluation of Alliance strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as they relate to finances, organizational strength, staff, board, mission, vision, programming and other aspects as needed.
  - 1.3 Hold annual retreat for Board of Directors and staff to review progress, set annual goals and assess organizational capacity.
  - 1.4 Recruit, develop, retain, and recognize volunteer Board Members.

## **I. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS**

### **Core Strategy**

Use best practices to ensure sound fiscal management with strong internal controls and oversight, and create an organizational culture that supports staff in fulfilling the Alliance’s mission.

### **Background**

The Alliance currently has good fiscal practices in place. A clean audit has been achieved for the past two years and staff is motivated to be constantly improving best business practices. However, the organization is operating with limited cash flow and reserve. It is the goal, given new leadership and program development, to solidify this situation moving forward. Additional practices to continue and improve include:

- Protecting organizational assets
- Ensuring the maintenance of accurate records of the organization’s financial activities

- Providing a framework for the organization’s financial decision making
- Establishing operating standards and behavioral expectations
- Serving as a training resource for staff
- Ensuring compliance with federal, state, and local legal and reporting requirements

### **Vision for the Future**

The Alliance’s work environment nourishes the skills and talents of staff and board members, maintains their enthusiasm and creativity and refreshes their spirit. The Alliance has an up-to-date, accurate and frequently referenced fiscal policies and procedures guide. Alliance audits demonstrate fiscal transparency and integrity. Alliance staff are familiar with and consistently execute best practices with respect to grant reporting, invoicing and filing.

### **2017-2018 Goals and Objectives**

- 1 Goal: Ensure that the Alliance is financially healthy and follows best business practices.
  - 1.1 Operate based on a Board-approved annual budget with regular reporting and annual audits to maximize fiscal transparency and integrity.
  - 1.2 Maximize the overhead and administration costs that can be recovered through grant programs.
  - 1.3 Improve and centralize financial management and fundraising database systems to provide up-to-date, accurate, and useful reporting and programmatic support.
  - 1.4 Ensure that the Alliance’s facility, equipment, furniture, information technology and software are adequate, current and healthful.
  - 1.5 Ensure that Alliance’s central filing system is well organized in both electronic and hard copy files.
  - 1.6 Create a library of governance and administrative documents and establish an annual monitoring process to ensure a periodic review.
  - 1.7 Perform an annual audit to ensure proper procedures are in place.
  - 1.8 Develop an annual giving pledge from individual Board members.
  - 1.9 Actively recruit new Board prospects to ensure long-term health of leadership.