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2023 Accomplishment Highlights

To protect and restore the resiliency of the ecosystems and communities of the Sierra Nevada.

Increasing Sierra Forest Health and Watershed Resiliency to Protect the Region's Health and Environment

Restored State Funding and Co-led Legislative Tour for Sierra Conservation

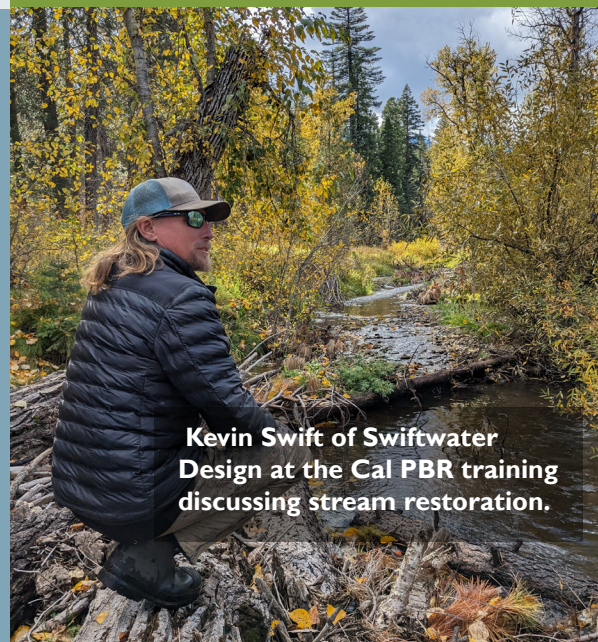
The Sierra Fund (TSF) co-chairs a collaboration with American River Conservancy, Sierra Forest Legacy, and Sierra Institute for Community and Environment that recently helped secure natural resource funding benefiting the Sierra. Hundreds of land trusts, conservation nonprofits, and agencies rely on state funds to do the work of protecting the Sierra Nevada. In 2023, the Governor's budget proposed cutting millions of dollars from conservation grant programs. Our collaborative advocacy effort helped restore millions of dollars in the budget. For example, \$187M was retained at the Wildlife Conservation Board; \$16M was restored for the Cascades and High Sierra Upper Watersheds Program; and fire funding for the Sierra Nevada Conservancy was saved. Also, in fall 2023, the collaborative took over 20 legislative staffers on a tour of the Sierra and, for two days, showcased the devastating extreme fire impacts and solutions to build a more resilient Sierra. Experiences like this help build champions for budget, bond, and policy work that support the Sierra into the future.

Organized Training Skilling-up Restoration Specialists

This October, TSF helped to run the second annual CA Process Based Restoration (Cal PBR) Network "Build Like a Beaver" training near Lake Almanor, to skill up over 70 restoration professionals. In contrast to more traditional interventions relying on heavy machinery, process-based restoration utilizes cost-effective enhancements, such as beaver dam analogs and post-assisted log structures, to leverage the system's natural energy for restoration. Process-based restoration can increase the ability of degraded meadow systems to retain water, support biodiversity, create fire resiliency, and adapt to climate change.

Completed Phase I at Forest Health Demonstration Site

TSF finished Phase 1 of the first-of-its-kind forest health project combining hydraulic mine restoration with fuels reduction that is being done at Grizzly Creek Hydraulic Mine Site in the Tahoe National Forest. TSF demonstrated how material from fuel load reduction to address wildfires can be used to create post-assisted log structures that capture sediment and reduce erosion. TSF also demonstrated how biochar can be applied at the site to restore soil health and act like a filter to improve water quality runoff. TSF took various conservation/restoration leaders to the site, to show how biochar is effective at reducing silts, clays, and particulate-bound mercury from getting into the run-off, all while improving soil health and capturing carbon.



Collaborating with Tribes to Support their Visions for Indigenous Guardianship of the Sierra

TSF Honored to Co-organize the First Tribal Summit on Sierra Forest Health

TSF was honored to partner with the United Auburn Indian Community Preservation Department (who hosted the event), Todd's Valley Miwok Maidu Cultural Foundation, and the University of California, Davis - Institute of the Environment to co-organize the first Tribal Summit on Sierra Nevada Forest Health in September. The two-day gathering allowed over 45 tribal members and leaders of various tribal stewardship projects to share insights, challenges, and future opportunities to advance Indigenous-led forest management. It was a powerful gathering featuring indigenous cuisine, Native American art, tours of the Maidu Museum, and terrific tribal speakers and discussion.



New Well, Fuel-load Reduction, and Invasive Species Removal on Deer Creek CHIRP Property Completed

TSF and the California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project (CHIRP, the nonprofit of the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe) completed many improvements on CHIRP's 32-acre property along Deer Creek. Work included fuel reduction, invasive species removal, and installation of a well to support native planting. The site is a good example of multi-faceted tribal land management, and this is just the first stage of the property revitalization. TSF also led a tour showcasing the site for others doing work to advance climate resilience with tribes who came from as far away as Louisiana, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Oakland!

Protecting Public Health and Restoring Ecosystems by Advancing Mine Restoration



Restoration crew at Grizzly Hydraulic Mine Site.

New Decision Includes Mine Restoration in Forest Health Work for Tahoe National Forest

Thanks to TSF's leadership, hydraulic mine restoration was included in the North Yuba Landscape Resilience Project NEPA Record of Decision for Tahoe National Forest. This will allow for forest health projects to include treatments to address hydraulic mine restoration. Before this, forest projects were not encouraged, or possibly even allowed, by the National Forest to address hydraulic mine restoration in their proposals. Now, hydraulic mine restoration will be a part of the NEPA decision for this region for the next 30 years and beyond - all thanks to TSF proposing solutions and language to heal these mine-scarred lands.

Released Analysis Showing Economic Benefits of Restoring Hydraulic Mines

TSF shared eye-opening results with the Yuba Water Agency from our Benefit-Cost Analysis of Hydraulic Mine Restoration, done with the World Resources Institute and funded by the Bay Area Council. The analysis found that for the study area, Oregon Creek and the Middle Yuba, hydraulic mine sites contribute 80-90% of the sediment filling up downstream water agency dams, thereby costing the agency millions to remove sediment to operate their facilities. For example, Yuba Water has spent \$20M in the last five years alone to remove sediment from Log Cabin and Our House Dams. The analysis found that for every \$1 spent on addressing the source of the problem by restoring the upstream hydraulic mine sites, the agency would save \$2.90 in downstream operations. This new analysis is turning heads to attract more support for hydraulic mine restoration!