



## **Tulare Basin Watershed Connections Collaborative Draft Strategic Plan – January 25, 2018**

### **Background and Purpose**

The Sierra Nevada Region plays a critical role in California’s water supply and hydrological system. More than 60% of California’s developed water supply originates in the Sierra Nevada, serving end users throughout the State. Snowpack in the Sierra region provides a natural form of water storage, and Sierra forests and meadows play a role in ensuring water quality and reliability. This system, however, is endangered by overgrown and unhealthy forests susceptible to disease and catastrophic fires. Without bold action to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration in the Sierra Nevada, the Tulare Basin will face ongoing adverse impacts to its environment, economy, and water supply. We need a cooperative regional response and investment in our forested watersheds by all beneficiaries.

Many stakeholders realize we need generate a greater understanding in the Tulare Basin Watershed (Figure 1) of the benefit of investment in forest health by the beneficiaries of the ecosystem services (particularly water-related benefits) provided by those healthy forests. This is particularly important in the Tulare Basin, where all the major population centers, major economic activities, and political influence reside in the valley. Most (if not all) of which are dependent upon a reliable and clean water supply which is, in turn, largely influenced by the condition and management of the Sierra Nevada forests. Ultimately, we want the beneficiaries of enhanced water yield, storage and quality provided by healthy forests to invest resources in and advocate for forest and watershed restoration and management.

In February and June of 2014, the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners (TBWP), Southern California Edison (SCE), and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) sponsored two workshops to bring together water managers in the Tulare Basin to begin discussions about ways to increase interest in collaborating on a holistic approach to water management in the Tulare Basin Watershed. The attendees overwhelmingly agreed that supporting headwaters management in the Tulare Basin will be very important for long-term regional resilience in the face of climate change and other stressors. The Tulare Basin Watershed Connections Workgroup (TBWCW) was formed to implement the actions identified in the workshop. In 2018, the

TBWCW transitioned to a more formal, permanent collaborative known as the Tulare Basin Watershed Connections Collaborative (TBWCC).

**Goal Statement of the Tulare Basin Watershed Connections Collaborative:** *To advance collaborative watershed planning and resource management in the Tulare Basin based on sound science and mutually identified needs for regional economic and ecological sustainability.*



Figure 1. Tulare Basin Watershed

### **Objectives (People, Projects, Data)**

The objectives of the TBWCC relate to the themes of “people, projects, and data”, which were recurring concepts commonly discussed by partners. “People” is a reference to the importance of engaging a broad group of key partners who have the desire, capacity, and authority to advance projects in the watershed. Those “projects” have largely already been identified through a variety of unconnected planning efforts, and need to be compiled and organized in a logical way that readily highlights priorities, needs, and information gaps. “Data” is needed to fill those gaps, and what has already been gathered needs to be readily accessible and useful for planning and implementing watershed projects.

The objectives below are intended to address those themes with concrete actions by the TBWCC partners.

**Objective 1.** Engage additional key partners (e.g. GSA board members) to help advance the goals and objectives of the TBWCC.

**Objective 2.** Advance high priority projects of mutual benefit and interest to parties in the TB Watershed by identifying and connecting members who have the capacity to apply for and administer grant funds and carry out on-the-ground projects.

**Objective 1 - Engage additional key partners to help advance the goals and objectives of the TBWCW.**

Task 1.1: Hold quarterly meetings of the Tulare Basin Watershed Connections Collaborative to bring partners together in one room

Task 1.2: Finalize the outreach & communication plan to ensure consistent messaging about the TBWCC.

Task 1.3: Develop outreach materials pertaining to the multiple benefits of watershed health appropriate for various audiences including: SGMA GSAs, IRWM groups, Ag-specific water agencies that receive a significant portion of their surface water from local sources, county water commissions, local communities, and educators. Different versions of the materials may be created for specific audiences and messages (e.g. technical vs. laypersons; English and Spanish, etc.).

Task 1.4: Continue momentum from the Headwaters to Groundwater Symposium and support next-steps

- Engage attendees who expressed interest in participating in follow-up meetings or workshops
- Give presentations at meetings of other collaborative efforts to share information about the benefits of investing in headwaters management

**Objective 2. Advance high priority projects of mutual benefit and interest to parties in the TB Watershed by identifying and connecting members who have the capacity to apply for and administer grant funds and carry out on-the-ground projects.**

Task 2.1: Create a Priority Projects Matrix for all projects for which TBWCC assistance (e.g. locating funding, connecting partners, proposal writing and review, etc.) is desired by the proponents.

Task 2.2: Create a map showing location of all Priority Projects with overlays of: IRWMGs, GSAs, conservation lands, ownership, and ??.

Task 2.2.1 Use data from IRWM plans, TBWP Conceptual Conservation Projects document (9/15), SJV Greenprint, CA LCC Central Valley Landscape Conservation Program, CDFW CAPPs, ??

Task 2.3: Target key outreach materials to key individuals/organizations from the Valley Floor who will benefit from investing in headwaters management.

**(Table of proposed activities for 2017, 2018, 2019)**

**2017**

**Role**

**Action/Task**

**Desired Outcome (Success!)**

Coordinator

## Appendix A. Draft Outreach Plan

### Tulare Basin Watershed Connections – DRAFT Outreach Plan Outline April 2016\*

1. **Purpose:** To generate a greater understanding of and investment in forest health by the beneficiaries of the ecosystem services (particularly water-related benefits) provided by those healthy forests. This is particularly important in the Tulare Basin, where all the major population centers, major economic activities, and political influence reside in the valley, most (if not all) of which are dependent upon a reliable and clean water supply which is, in turn, largely influenced by the condition and management of the Sierra Nevada forests. Ultimately, we want the beneficiaries of enhanced water yield, storage and quality provided by healthy forests to invest resources in and advocate for forest and watershed restoration and management.
  
2. **Audience:** Major water-rights holders, groups involved in local water policy, some general public. Beginning with...
  - a. County Water Commissions
  - b. Tulare Basin IRWM groups
  - c. Ag-specific water agencies that receive a significant portion (a majority?) of their surface water from local sources
  - d. Local communities – Town hall meetings?
  - e. Others?
    - i. Educators
  
3. **Message:** The Sierra Nevada Region plays a critical role in California’s water supply and hydrological system. More than 60% of California’s developed water supply originates in the Sierra Nevada, serving end users throughout the State. Snowpack in the Sierra region provides a natural form of water storage, and Sierra forests and meadows play a role in ensuring water quality and reliability. This system, however, is endangered by overgrown and unhealthy forests susceptible to disease and catastrophic fires. Without bold action to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration in the Sierra Nevada, the Tulare Basin will face ongoing adverse impacts to its environment, economy, and water supply. We need a cooperative regional response and investment in our forested watersheds by all beneficiaries.
  
4. **Resources:**
  - a. WIP Power Point, tweaked to include locally relevant information
  - b. Maps?
  - c. Handouts?
    - i. SGMA – “Watershed Connections Considerations and SGMA Implementation”

*\* This is a concept Sarah Campe pitched to SNC managers a couple of year ago...it got put on hold while the WIIP was launched, but it may provide a foundation for building an outreach plan*

## **Appendix B. Priority Projects (SSIRWMG, TBWP, ??)**

Description/Title	Proponent(s)	Approximately Budget	Needed for Success
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## **Appendix C. Needs and Capacity Survey**